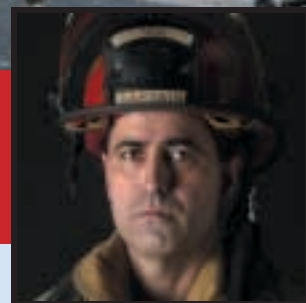
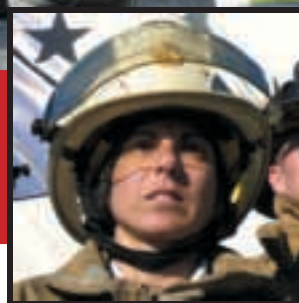
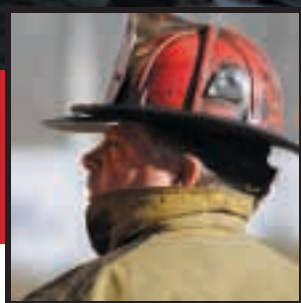


SECOND EDITION



Retention & Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services

CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

PREFACE

In 2004, the US Fire Administration (USFA), The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) worked in partnership with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) to revise the 1998 text, *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions*.

The original text was based on a series of workshops bringing together volunteer fire service members from all the states. This edition has been enhanced with new research and current issues as the emergency services enter the 21st Century. Many of the original reasons for the recruitment problems remain: lack of time, apathy, and excessive requirements. However, they appear to have become even greater issues with the passing of time.

Although the recruitment and retention challenges continue to grow, some volunteer organizations maintain good membership while others continue to function with reduced numbers. Those organizations that seek solutions and adapt to our changing personnel environment are successful. Individuals are still willing to give their time to volunteer emergency services organizations provided the following:

- The experience is rewarding and worth their time
- The training requirements are not excessive
- The time demands are adaptable and manageable
- They are rewarded with a personal sense of value
- There is good leadership minimizing conflict
- There is ample support for the organization

The emergency services are the most demanding of volunteer activities today. The physical and time demands associated with training; responding to incidents; maintaining facilities, apparatus, and equipment; fundraising; and administering a non-profit corporation are grueling if not properly managed. In today's hectic world, it requires strong leadership to make the emergency services the organizations that will attract volunteers. This text will cover many of the problems of recruitment and retention and provide some examples of solutions that have worked in volunteer organizations across the nation.

Any opinions, findings, recommendations, or conclusions found in this text do not necessarily reflect the views of the NVFC or DHS/USFA.

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INTRODUCTION

The volunteer emergency services are a long-standing tradition in the United States that often encompasses families generation after generation. Unfortunately, it is also a tradition in danger of weakening and possibly even dying out. Many fire departments across the nation today are experiencing more difficulty with recruiting and retaining members than ever before. Although there has been a decline in the number of active volunteer firefighters nationally from a high of 897,750 in 1984, the trend has changed in the last few years. The number of volunteers dipped to a low of 770,100 volunteers in 1989. While the number has increased since then, the problem of recruitment and retention is still serious in many areas. The most recent figures (2003) indicate over 800,050 volunteer firefighters, 73 percent of the nation's firefighting forces.



Fire departments can no longer count on the children of current members following in their parent's footsteps. Nor can they count on a continuous stream of community people eager to donate their time and energy to their local volunteer fire department. Adding to the problem, departments cannot rely on members staying active in the volunteer fire service for long periods of time.

In order to address recruitment and retention problems, the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), in cooperation with the United States Fire Administration (USFA), initiated a study of this issue that culminated with a national workshop on recruiting and retention in 1993. Volunteer representatives from 16 states participated in this event, which was held at the National Emergency Training Center, (USFA's National Fire Academy), in Emmitsburg, Maryland. From this workshop came a general understanding of the problems with retention and recruitment nationwide, as well as many possible solutions to these problems. The findings were documented in the Interim Report on Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions and in Recruitment and Retention in the Volunteer Fire Service, Problems and Solutions, Final Report, December 1998.

In 2004, the National Volunteer Fire Council released its Cost Savings Study and Calculator. The figures in the study reinforce the need for the volunteer fire service to increase its efforts in recruitment and retention of members. The Cost Savings Study conducted by the Public Safety and Environmental Protection Institute at St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with assistance from VFIS found that the annual national savings resulting from the volunteer fire service is \$37.2 billion dollars. This is an average of over \$45, 000 per volunteer. The economy of this great country is substantially strengthened by the efforts of its volunteer fire departments.

In 2004, the NVFC and the USFA again decided to address the issue of retention and recruitment due to the ongoing national problem. This endeavor includes much of the earlier work, a review of recent literature, and a field survey to determine current initiatives that are in use and working in the field.

As indicated in the earlier research, there is no single reason for the decline in volunteers in most departments. However, there is a universal consensus that skilled department leadership is a key to resolving the problems. Retention and recruitment problems usually can be traced to several underlying factors: more demands on people's time in a hectic modern society; more stringent training requirements; population shifts from smaller towns to urban centers; changes in the nature of small town industry and farming; internal leadership problems; and a decline in the sense of civic responsibility, among other factors. Although some regions are more affected than others, and the problems and solutions vary across regions, even within states and counties, volunteer retention and recruitment is a problem nationwide. *Specifically, it is a local issue and must be dealt with locally.*



Can the trend in declining volunteerism be reversed? Information collected reveals that departments that have taken steps to deal with the problems have seen a resurgence in volunteerism. This indicates that many of the problems can be mitigated or eliminated if proper attention and resources are given to them. This text will attempt to identify and share the ideas and practices that are successful in recruitment and retention. Departments that have failed to address the problems and challenges of volunteering in today's world have been forced to hire career firefighters, consolidate, or even close their doors.

FIELD SURVEY

A core component of this project was to query the volunteer emergency service community on current issues that:

- make members want to volunteer
- keep volunteers serving
- make volunteers leave the organization

Surveys were conducted via online methods, at various fire and emergency medical service (EMS) events, and based upon various association membership queries during the fourth quarter of 2004. The data was compiled and analyzed by the Public Safety and Environmental Protection Institute of St. Joseph's University. The findings, provided later in this report, found several key areas of concern that will require action to address effective recruitment and retention efforts in the future.

THE RETENTION & RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES: *Causes & Effects*

It is important to determine the causes of the recruitment and retention problem in the volunteer fire service. Once causes are identified, it is much easier to develop solutions.

Several factors underlie today's retention and recruitment problem in the volunteer fire service. It is a complex and multi-faceted problem. Although, stringent training standards, leadership problems, and time constraints caused by increased family responsibilities - particularly in two-career families and single parent households - seem to be the most common causes, there are many other factors contributing to the turnover that volunteer departments are currently facing. The problems most frequently cited by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2003 are as follows:

Lack of time	44.7%
Health/medical problems	14.7%
Family responsibilities	9.5%
Other	8.2%
No longer required/relevant	5.8%
Wasn't interested	4.3%
Moved, transportation, expenses	4.2%
No one asked	3.2%
Burnout	2.4%
No longer member of organization	1.7%

The following is the data from the St. Joseph's University Study in 2004

What Makes Your Members Leave Your Organization?*

No time to volunteer	92.3%
Conflicts in organization	47.8%
Organizational leadership created adverse atmosphere	46.7%
Too much training	45.6%
Attitude of existing personnel to newcomers	39.1%
Criticism received from officers/older members	38.0%
Lack of camaraderie	19.5%

** Many respondents indicated more than one reason for leaving the organization*

The causes of the problems are similar in all 50 states. No single region of the country is dealing with problems that are significantly different than those found in other regions. There are some differences, however, in problems faced by urban versus rural communities. These differences stem from the sociological differences in the urban versus rural communities, which will be discussed later.

On a regional level, the northeast has seen the greatest decline in volunteers because it has traditionally been protected by volunteers more than other regions. Four states (New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey) that have historically been served by large numbers of volunteers have all experienced a major volunteer decline.

TABLE 1.

Retention and Recruitment Root Causes

SOURCES OF PROBLEMS	CONTRIBUTING FACTORS
TIME DEMANDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the two-income family and working multiple jobs • increased training time demands • higher emergency call volume • additional demands within department fund-raising, administrative)
TRAINING REQUIREMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher training standards and new federal requirements • more time demands • greater public expectation of fire department's response capabilities (broader range of services such as EMS, hazmat, technical rescue, etc.) • additional training demands to provide broader range of services • recertification demands
INCREASING CALL VOLUME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fire department assuming wider response roles (EMS, hazmat, technical rescue. • increasing emergency medical call volume • increase in number of automatic fire alarms
CHANGES IN THE "NATURE" OF THE BUSINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abuse of emergency services by the public • less of an emphasis on social aspects of volunteering
CHANGES IN SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS (IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN AREAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transience • loss of community feeling • less of community pride • less of an interest or time for volunteering • two-income family and time demands • "me" generation
CHANGES IN SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS (IN RURAL AREAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employers less willing to let employees off to run calls • time demand • "me" generation
LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor leadership and lack of coordination • authoritative management style • failure to manage change
FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair Labor Standards Act interpretation • "2 in, 2 out" OSHA ruling requiring four firefighters on scene before entering hazardous environment • Environmental Protection Agency live-fire burn limitations
INCREASING USE OF COMBINATION DEPARTMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disagreements among chiefs or other department leaders • friction between volunteer and career members
HIGHER COST OF HOUSING (IN AFFLUENT COMMUNITIES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • volunteers cannot afford to live in the community they serv
AGING COMMUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater number of older people today • lack of economic growth and jobs in some towns
INTERNAL CONFLICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disagreements among departmental leaders • friction between volunteer and career members

TIME DEMANDS

Volunteering in the fire service is one of the most time demanding volunteer activities today. Time demands come from many sources: emergency calls, training, meetings, maintenance of the stations and equipment, and fund raising to name a few. Most departments require members to contribute a minimum amount of time each month into each of these areas. Each area is vital to the operation of the department. Members in the departments typically contribute 20 to 100 hours per month or more.

Historically, since 1648 when New York Governor Peter Stuyvesant organized a group of volunteers to provide fire protection, inspect chimneys, and raise money to purchase ladders and buckets, volunteers have faced time demands of running calls and running their department. Why have time demands become such a big issue? There is no simple answer. Many factors, with origins both inside and outside of the fire service, have combined to make time demands one of the most critical problems facing the volunteer fire service today. These factors include:

The Two-Income Family - The surge in the number of two-income families since the early 1970s has meant that people have very little time to volunteer. Time is spent at work, with the children, and maintaining the house. Spare time is an anomaly today. The little time people do find to volunteer is often too little to allow them to become active in the fire service. Those who do volunteer in the emergency services today often discover that the time requirements, particularly the start-up demands associated with initial training, are too great.

Increased Training Time Demands - Training time requirements have risen steadily. In many departments until the mid-1960s, new firefighters were given minimal training (usually under 30 hours) before they were allowed to ride fire apparatus. In some cases, members were given a uniform and protective clothing the night they joined and could be seen fighting fire the same night. They learned on the job. Today, this is not acceptable.

Higher Emergency Call Volume - Many volunteer fire departments have seen their volume of emergency calls increase between 25 and 75 percent since the early 1980s especially if the organization is providing any medical services. This has dramatically increased time demands on volunteers.

Increased Demands within Departments - The volume of work that an individual volunteer must handle today is greater than in past years because there are fewer members, leaving the remaining members to assume more responsibilities in all areas (from going to more fire/EMS calls to administration functions of the department). In addition, there are greater demands of paperwork in today's emergency service. Fire chiefs must ensure that everything from emergency responses to training is documented. A state or local report must be completed for each response. The paperwork today is also more detailed than in the past because of legal needs to provide more comprehensive documentation. There is fear that incomplete documentation could leave a department vulnerable to civil and criminal actions.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Today, most fire departments require volunteers to complete a one hour basic firefighting class of over 100 hours before being able to fight fires (*see Table 2*). Departments that provide emergency medical care may require members to certify as an emergency medical first responder, which is another 75-120 hours of training. Firefighters must also attend federally-mandated annual hazardous materials training which can range from 10-25 hours. Although recertification is not as time demanding as the initial training, it is another demand that volunteers must fit into their busy schedules.

Increased training requirements have had a major effect on retention and recruitment. On-the-job training is no longer permitted as a substitute for formal training and certification. The time when a volunteer can start to go on calls and do other exciting duties is delayed, and their initial enthusiasm may be lost. Also some volunteers are not good at taking written tests and may quit rather than face one, fail, and have to leave. Formal training, however, has made both the volunteer and career fire service more professional and effective.

Information on EMS training requirements for each state can be found at: www.emsmagazine.com/SURVEY/index.html

Increased training requirements have been particularly traumatic for older members who have no certifications and are no longer allowed to run certain calls. Some who once volunteered to simply join in and pull hose or drive the apparatus are no longer allowed to do so.

TABLE 2.
National Standard Training Modules

Training Module	Average Length of Class in Hours	Approximate Time to Complete for Volunteers*
FIREFIGHTER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefighter I • Firefighter II • Instructor • Officer I • Officer II • Officer III • Officer IV 	100 hours 100 hours 45 hours 40-60 hours 40-60 hours 40 hours 40 hours	4 months 4 months 1 month 1 month 1 month 1 month 1 month
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Responder • EMT - Basic • EMT - Intermediate • EMT - Paramedic 	48 hours 136 hours 125-300 hours 350-1500 hours	2.5 months 4-6 months 4-6 months 6 months - 1 year
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness • Operations • Technician 	25 hours 40 hours 40-80 hours	2 weeks 1 month 1 month
OTHER COURSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle Operation • Pumps/Hydraulics • Aircraft Rescue • Vehicle Extrication • Silo Rescue • Farm Machinery Extrication • Water Rescue 	20 hours 60 hours 50 hours 25-50 hours 35 hours 25 hours 16 hours	2 weeks 2 months 1.5 months 2 weeks 1 month 2 weeks 1 months

*When Taken Several Nights Per Week and/or on Weekends

The root issues that have caused training requirements to increase are discussed below.

Higher Training Standards - Training for both volunteer and career firefighters has grown more formal and comprehensive. National consensus training standards created by fire service committees functioning under the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) have increased both classroom and practical requirements. The standards are designed to increase safety awareness and establish minimum competencies at various training levels. The majority of states have adopted these standards. In addition, the U.S. Department of Transportation established standards for emergency medical training that have been adopted by all 50 states. These standards have increased training time demands substantially.

Federal Requirements - The federal government has enacted training requirements for volunteers through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). OSHA requirements apply to volunteers only in certain states and are generally met through basic firefighting courses. EPA requirements apply to all volunteers. The EPA mandates that all volunteers take annual hazardous materials training. In addition, state EPAs have limited the burning of old structures in certain areas of the country that further restricts the opportunity for live burn training.

Broader Range of Services - The consensus of fire chiefs from across the country is that the public's expectations of the fire department are greater today than in years past. The public expects the fire department to provide assistance for emergencies that include fires, fire alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, broken water pipes, natural gas leaks, medical emergencies, vehicle accidents, hazardous materials spills, mysterious odors, structural collapse, extrications, water rescue, and even bomb threats or terrorist incidents. When the public calls for assistance in any of these situations, the fire department must be ready to respond. To respond to the public's expectations, firefighters must attend a wider variety of training courses.

Recertification Demands - Recertification requirements vary among the states, but generally range from annually to every five years. Time requirements for recertification usually are approximately one quarter the length of the original class. All states have medical recertification requirements. The National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians minimum requirements are 24 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) per year on specified subjects. In addition, some states have their own standards that may be different; for example, Pennsylvania requires 18 CEUs on any subject. It is important for each department to know the specific requirements that apply to it.

INCREASING CALL VOLUME

During the same time in which the number of volunteers has declined, the volunteer fire service has had to contend with an increase in the volume of emergency calls due to the lack of education on when to call 911. The National Fire Protection Association reports that fire department call volumes increase at varying rates depending on the community. This means that volunteer fire departments have to do more with fewer people, and that the overall demands on individual volunteers have increased. Major causes of the increasing call volume are discussed below.

Increasing Emergency Medical Call Volume - Emergency medical calls have created the greatest increase in call volumes for fire departments. Years ago, most fire departments did not respond to EMS calls. Currently, more departments are becoming involved with providing medical service. This may only be at a First Responder Level; but regardless of the level, increases the response load considerably.

Units responding from fire stations that are located throughout a community is the best means to reach a person in medical crises quickly. The public has grown to expect this rapid response capability from fire departments. Popularization of EMS by the media and various television programs has led some people to call for help for problems that do not fit the traditional definition of an emergency such as general sicknesses. In addition, some people use the EMS system for medical advice, and some persons use it to access primary care or because they cannot afford transportation to the hospital.

Increase in the Number of Automatic Alarms - As previously noted, the volume of automatic alarms has grown steadily, particularly in areas with commercial buildings that often have alarm systems. Fire departments have also experienced a sharp increase in call volume due to alarm system malfunctions. Many volunteers are growing tired of the time demands associated with responding to these malfunction false alarms. Some departments enact policies that after a set number of malfunctions in a given time period, the occupants are charged the response costs and/or fined to reduce the unnecessary use of volunteer resources. In addition, medical alert alarms are adding to unnecessary emergency responses.

Greater Reliance by the Public on Fire Department's Services - The public has not only grown to expect a wider range of services from the fire department, but also has grown to rely more heavily on the fire department. A greater reliance translates into more calls. For example, in years past when someone broke an arm he/she would have a relative or neighbor drive him/her to the hospital. Today, people often call for an ambulance instead. The public is also aware of the greater knowledge and professionalism of firefighters. As a result, people may call the fire department to check an electrical concern instead of calling an electrician. Or they may call an Emergency Medical Technician for advice about how to treat an injury instead of calling a doctor or going to the hospital. This greater reliance on the fire department has contributed to the increase in call volume.

Many long time members of the emergency services will say that the fire service today "just isn't what it used to be." Fire departments have gone through many changes over the years to adapt to new requirements and demands. As noted above, emergency service providers are required to take more training, and the public is calling more and demanding a broader range of services. These requirements have built to the point that many veteran volunteer firefighters say that volunteering just is not fun anymore. The situation is exacerbated by the following two factors.

CHANGES IN THE "NATURE OF THE BUSINESS"

Abuse of the Emergency Services by the Public - Many volunteers say they have tried to adapt to the increased demands, but the breaking point comes when they feel abused by the public. "Abuse of 911 and our services by the public today has driven volunteers right out the door," said one fire chief. For example, some homeowners and businesses fail to correct problems with malfunctioning automatic alarm systems that summon the volunteers multiple times, often at night. Or citizens call 911 to request transport to the hospital for minor stomach cramps. When the public excessively requests emergency assistance in situations that are not true emergencies, the volunteers burn out.

Less Emphasis on Social Aspects of Volunteering - The loss of the social aspects associated with volunteering has hurt recruitment and retention. Many volunteers join fire departments and stay involved not only to serve their community and help others in need, but also to develop social relationships. Some volunteers report that the time demands of volunteering coupled with the time constraints of everyday life have left no time to develop social ties or spend time outside of the station with other firefighters. Likewise, many fire departments have closed down their firehouse clubs and pool rooms that historically have been social centers for many volunteers.

CHANGES IN SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS IN URBAN/SUBURBAN AREAS

The sociological changes experienced by volunteer fire departments in growing areas, particularly around cities, have affected recruitment and retention. Unfortunately, larger populations usually do not translate into larger number of volunteers. Many of the factors that have fueled the sociological changes have already been mentioned: less time to volunteer, the two-income family, and less of an interest in serving the community or volunteering by younger persons in particular (the “me” generation).

The transience of many large suburban and urban areas has hurt recruitment and retention. People who move often are less likely to become involved in a volunteer fire department. Likewise, fire departments usually do not want individuals who spend a year getting trained and then leave. The problem with transience is particularly acute in resort areas or communities with military populations. In other areas, where the number of large farms and ranches is decreasing and land is being sold and subdivided, fire departments have experienced a surge in transience.

Unfortunately, growth can sometimes lead to a lost sense of community, especially in metropolitan areas where people commonly live in one area and work in another. This may result in people taking a less active role in their communities. Residents of urban areas also tend to have less community pride and spirit than residents of smaller towns. The loss of community spirit means that people are less interested in serving their communities. Fire departments in suburban and urban areas have found that this characteristic has hurt recruitment.

CHANGES IN SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS IN RURAL AREAS

Changes in sociological conditions have also affected recruitment and retention in smaller towns. Some of the changes, including time demands and the “me” generation, are similar to the changes experienced in urban areas.

A relatively new sociological change seen by many small towns is the replacement of small main street businesses with large, multipurpose department stores or regional shopping facilities. A single large store has put many small main street stores out of business. These stores tend to be less personal, and managers are less willing to let employees leave when the alarm sounds. Large corporations are usually not as closely tied to the community as are local businesses, and as a result, are often less willing to give employees time off to volunteer.

LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS

Many retention and recruitment problems can be traced back directly or indirectly to leadership problems. Effective leadership helps retain members as well as reduce dissatisfaction. Ineffective leadership is the most common reason for a decline in membership.

Poor Leadership and Lack of Coordination - Some of the leadership problems stem directly from the lack of direction given to members, particularly new members. New members need direction, especially in the area of training. If this initial direction is not provided, new recruits often become frustrated and quit. A program of mentoring and coaching needs to be implemented for new members. Incumbent members must be assigned to assist, acquaint, and get the new recruit off to a good start. A department that is progressive and stays on the leading edge tends to have an

easier time with recruitment and retention because its members take more pride in the department. Progressiveness, however, requires strong leadership and coordination of members' efforts.

Authoritarian Management Style - Dictatorial leaders drive members out of volunteer fire departments. Volunteers feel they are given enough orders in their day-to-day jobs, and prefer not to have every action dictated around the station. Participative management styles attract and retain members. Volunteer members want to have some "ownership" in the organization. They must have a sense of worth and feel they are using their talents to contribute to the overall good. They cannot be treated poorly or looked down upon. Volunteers also have to understand the need for discipline, the fireground is not the place for democracy.

Failure to Manage Change - Change is inevitable in any fire department, and it can be painful if it is not managed properly. Departments that undergo major changes (such as consolidations) that are not well-managed will usually lose members. One of the most common causes of management problems during periods of change is poor communications. This is an information age and individuals are used to being kept well informed by media and internet sources. Withholding information will only lead to gossip, hypothesizing, lower morale, and suspicion. Poor communications are generally the sign of an authoritarian manager who is a weak leader. More will be said about this in the section on leadership.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Several acts by the Federal government in recent years have had an impact on recruitment and retention.

Fair Labor Standards Act - The Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA) is a Federal law administered through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) that governs compensation and overtime requirements for hourly employees. The FLSA prevents employers from requiring or coercing employees to volunteer at their place of employment. The FLSA has existed since 1938, but in 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that FLSA requirements are applicable to state and local government employees. The ruling requires local governments to pay monetary compensation to firefighters who work overtime.

Most career firefighters are considered hourly employees and fall under the provisions of this Act. Based on the 1985 ruling and a 1993 DOL interpretation of the law, career firefighters are prohibited from volunteering during their off duty hours at a fire station in the same jurisdiction in which they are employed, unless their volunteer activities are a separate capacity from their paid work activities. For example, a career firefighter could not volunteer in the same jurisdiction during off duty hours to serve as a firefighter, but could perform administrative tasks at a fire station. The 1985 Supreme Court decision enforced minimum wage and overtime provisions of the FLSA within state and local governments, which has impacted many fire departments in both urban and rural areas. This has caused some volunteer systems to lose hundreds of members. Subsequently, staffing problems emerge which leads to a lack of protection for citizens.

Some state Labor Departments have further interpreted the FLSA prohibition to apply to volunteer fire instructors who are employed as state police, and nurses who volunteer to teach EMS (even though the law only prohibits employees from volunteering in the same job capacity as which they work). Fear by some city officials of possibly being required to pay back wages to employees who volunteer during their off-duty hours has caused some localities to get rid of volunteer members who are city employees, even though the members are not employed as firefighters. This occurred in Hanover, Massachusetts, where the local labor office interpreted FLSA to prohibit three call firefighters who were town employees (a teacher, a janitor, and a truck driver) from volunteering as firefighters.

Department of Labor adopts Benshoff FLSA test

Fire Chief, Dec 1, 2002

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Byline: John Rukavina

Late in 1999, a Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals decision - Benshoff v. City of Virginia Beach, 180 F3d 752 - caught my eye. It dealt with the Fair Labor Standards Act status of career Virginia Beach firefighters serving as volunteers on the volunteer EMS squads that serve Virginia Beach. As I wrote in the March 2000 Lex de Incendiis, "Latest FLSA ruling takes an unexpected twist," available at www.firechief.com:

"More than a decade ago, a wrestling match started between the fire service and the U.S. Department of Labor. The bout began in Montgomery County, Md....

"[But] A recent decision by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ... might have put a significant dent in the Department of Labor's decision ... and 10 or 15 years ago, it might have made a difference in Montgomery County, Md."

That unexpected twist has come full circle.

In the 1980s, Montgomery County career firefighters were county employees assigned to fire stations owned and operated by private non-profit corporation fire departments. Some of those career firefighters who were assigned to work at one department also volunteered at another PNP fire department elsewhere in Montgomery County. Others who believed that a career firefighter could not "volunteer" for its employer, Montgomery County, filed a complaint with the Department of Labor.

At that time the DOL ruled that, even though Montgomery County's PNP fire departments were corporate entities separate from the county, those departments were linked closely enough to the county to trigger the provisions of FLSA (29 U.S. Code section 203(e)(4)(A)), which provides that a public safety employee cannot volunteer to provide "services for a public agency" that are "the same type of services which the individual is employed to perform for such agencies." As a consequence of that ruling, Montgomery County prohibited its career firefighters from volunteering for any PNP fire department in Montgomery County.

Now, we fast-forward to 1998 and join Virginia Beach firefighter Gregg Alan Benshoff and six other firefighters as they sue Virginia Beach for failure to pay them for time spent at work as members of volunteer rescue squads that contracted with Virginia Beach as EMS providers.

Benshoff and his co-plaintiffs argued that they were entitled to hour-for-hour pay for their volunteer rescue squad activities because those squads contracted with Virginia Beach's Department of Emergency Medical Services to deliver EMS in Virginia Beach, and because, as part of their jobs, Virginia Beach firefighters respond to medical emergencies and provide Basic Life Support treatment (the rescue squads provide Advanced Life Support and transport services).

Benshoff and his co-plaintiffs also argued that the relationships between the rescue squads and Virginia Beach, and the fact that their career and volunteer work involved delivery of emergency medical care, meant that Benshoff and his co-plaintiffs were "employees" of the city, even when they served as volunteer members of the rescue squad.

Both the federal District Court (a trial court) and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against Benshoff and his colleagues. The judges of both courts agreed that the rescue squads were not "controlled" by Virginia Beach to the degree that would be required to trigger the "public-agency/same-employer/same work" provision of FLSA.

In analyzing the issue, the court asked three questions:

- *Were the rescue squad members controlled by the city's Department of Emergency Medical Services the same way an employer customarily controls an employee? The court asked whether the Department of EMS could override a rescue squad's acceptance or rejection of a candidate for membership. The answer was no. And could the department discipline a rescue squad's individual members? Again, no.*
- *Were the day-to-day operations of the rescue squads controlled by the Department of Emergency Medical Services? Although the Department of EMS divided Virginia Beach into response brigades and zones; selected brigade commanders, squad commanders and assistant squad commanders to coordinate EMS activities in those zones; and created schedules for assignment of rescue squad members as the shift EMS supervisor, these activities were not "sufficient to establish an employer-employee relationship under the FLSA."*
- *Was the city's provision of cars for use by the rescue squads, and of loans and grants to purchase rescue trucks and ambulances, enough to establish the control required for evidence of an employer-employee relationship? No. And what about the workers' comp and death benefits the city furnished to rescue squad members? Again, no.*

The Fourth Circuit judges also disagreed with DOL's "friend of the court" argument that EMS work done by volunteer squad members was done for the City of Virginia Beach and was thus "providing [public safety] services for a public agency."

The Fourth Circuit ruled that "there was no reason to believe that Congress intended to insert the issues of control and benefit to the exclusion of all other considerations into the determination of whether a public agency employee is volunteering services 'for a public agency' in the first instance." Instead, the Fourth Circuit judges said that they would focus on whether a particular activity constitutes employment to "ferret out any cases where, unlike the one before us, there is a 'sham' volunteer corporation ... to avoid the compensation provisions of the [Fair Labor Standards] Act."

Benshoff captured the attention of Montgomery County's PNP fire departments and prompted the Burtonsville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. to ask the DOL for a formal "opinion letter" addressing the question of whether the Benshoff analysis and conclusions also applied to Montgomery County and its relationships with its fire departments.

On Nov. 27, 2001, DOL Acting Administrator Annabelle Lockhart issued DOL's formal opinion - in applying the Benshoff analysis to Montgomery County and its PNP fire departments, Lockhart ruled that career Montgomery County firefighters who served as volunteers in one of Montgomery County's PNP corporation fire departments were not "employees" when they served as volunteers.

Lockhart's opinion was challenged by Montgomery County, and in May 2002, Administrator Tammy McCutcheon, who was Lockhart's successor, met with the Montgomery County attorney, Montgomery County Fire/Rescue staff, two Rockville Volunteer Fire Department Inc. members and a representative of the career firefighters union to review Lockhart's decision. At the end of the meeting, McCutcheon stood by Lockhart's findings.

"We noted," said McCutcheon, in a post-meeting opinion letter dated June 5, 2002, "that there are a number of factual differences between the Benshoff case and the situation in Montgomery County, the most significant being that in Montgomery County the volunteers provide exactly the same services (both fire and emergency medical services) as do the career employees. In contrast, in Benshoff the city was not licensed by the state to provide the Advanced Life Support services provided by the rescue squads, and the rescue squad volunteers did no firefighting.

“However, we concluded that the primary facts that led the court in Benshoff to conclude that the FLSA did not require compensation for volunteer time were similar in Montgomery County... Those separate corporations exercise day-to-day control over what positions volunteers hold, what they do and when they do it.

“Therefore, in light of the Benshoff decision, we conclude that the FLSA does not require Montgomery County to pay its career firefighters if they volunteer, freely and without coercion, to provide services to the non-profit fire and rescue corporations in the County. This is true whether they are providing services as a firefighters or as an emergency medical technician.” [Emphasis added.]

Until June 5, 2002, arguments about Benshoff and its applicability to fire and rescue departments were largely limited to Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina - the jurisdiction of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, because the opinion of one circuit court isn't automatically binding in another circuit court's jurisdiction. But the Lockhart and McCutcheon opinion letters brought the Benshoff tests out onto the national stage because DOL opinion letters can be used in every state.

When news of these formal opinions reached the fire service, there were many fire chiefs who believed that his or her career firefighters could also serve as volunteers in the same department without FLSA penalty. That impression was supported by summaries of those opinions by FLSA experts. Here's one example:

“In a major policy change, the U.S. Department of Labor has decided that firefighters may volunteer to perform the same type of services within their employer's jurisdiction that they are paid to perform - without those hours increasing the employer's overtime pay obligations under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). [Emphasis added]

The casual reader might conclude from this bulletin that “within their employer's jurisdiction” means the jurisdiction of any fire department employer. And many casual readers did. Within a day or two of the release of McCutcheon's opinion letter, I'd fielded at least 20 phone calls from fire chiefs of combination fire departments who wanted me to confirm that DOL had seen the light and freed them from the shackles of FLSA's overtime requirements.

But I couldn't help them. The “jurisdiction” that DOL's Lockhart and McCutcheon addressed was limited to

- A county or city fire/rescue department,*
- With career employees,*
- Who volunteered with an independent private non-profit corporation fire (or rescue) department in the same county or city,*
- Which “exercise[s] day-to-day control over what positions volunteers hold, what they do and when they do it.”*

If your fire department jurisdiction meets all four of the criteria listed above, your career firefighters - like those of Virginia Beach and Montgomery County - have new volunteer opportunities. If not, hang onto your FLSA reference materials, because you still need them.

Two-in, Two-out OSHA Ruling - The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued an interpretation in 1995 of one of its long-standing standards to require fire department to have four firefighters assembled at a structure fire before an interior attack could be made on the fire. The intent of this ruling is to require two firefighters to standby outside of the structure as a safety team for the two firefighters who enter. Unfortunately however, this ruling creates an additional burden on departments that are already struggling with the size of their memberships. To comply with the ruling, some departments have had to increase the number of

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volunteers on a duty shift, which ultimately creates more time demands on the members. As discussed previously, time demands are one of the leading causes of recruitment and retention problems.

EPA Live-Fire Burn Limitations - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued strict standards that restrict fire departments and training agencies from conducting live-fire training burns in certain areas of the country. The rulings are part of larger emission control standards that affect urban, suburban, and industrial areas in particular. Fire departments in areas affected by the standards cannot conduct the realistic training burns that they once did. To complete training courses, firefighters in these areas may be forced to travel great distances to areas where they can conduct live-fire burns. This creates greater time demands on volunteers who are trying to complete live fire training.

INTERNAL CONFLICT

Internal conflicts and other stresses drive members out of fire departments. The two greatest problems with internal conflict in the volunteer fire service originate among leaders or between volunteer and career members in combination departments.

Disagreements Among Departmental Leaders - When disagreements between departmental leaders (either officers or administrative officers) develop, the membership may become disillusioned. When the disagreement becomes personal or is not resolved quickly, the resulting tension drives members out. Unfortunately in many departments, power politics arise. Generally, the major concern is who will be the “boss,” and make major decisions. Egos get in the way of the purpose of the organization and providing the best emergency services for the community. More will be written about this later.

Friction Between Volunteer and Career Members - A major source of recruitment and retention problems in some combination volunteer-career departments is friction between members. The friction often arises from disagreements about the way things should be run, or power struggles over whether a volunteer or career member/officer will be in charge at an emergency incident. Sometimes, one group may have more training than another group and claim it is more experienced. It is vital that the training levels for both career and volunteer members be the same. The state of Illinois is a good example of a single training program. And in fact, some volunteers may even make more responses; therefore, gain more experience than a shift-working career member. Good examples of where these problems have been overcome and smooth working combination departments exist are the Baltimore County, MD, Fire Department and the Hanover County, VA, Public Safety Department. In Baltimore County this is accomplished by a unique system of having a single fire department, but allowing the individual volunteer stations to maintain their identity, and organizational and administrative authority. However, all career and volunteer stations must meet the same standards of staffing, training, and operational procedures. A career chief officer assumes control of incident operations upon arrival.

HIGHER COST OF HOUSING

Many affluent areas across the country are struggling to retain members who cannot afford to live where they volunteer. The volunteer fire service has historically drawn a large number of blue-collar individuals who typically cannot afford the expenses of high income areas. The rate of decline in the number of volunteers in these communities is often inversely proportional to the increase in housing costs. Members who join departments in affluent areas when they are younger generally cannot afford to purchase their first house in those communities so they move to

another jurisdiction that may be too far away to respond as a volunteer. In some cases, the cost of renting is also too expensive for volunteers. It is usually difficult for affluent, white-collar communities to replace these members. As an example, these communities need to explore volunteer fire station residing/in-station programs (with some compensation) for night coverage. Daytime coverage may be available from shift works or career personnel may be necessary. In some cases, outside aid can augment the volunteer response, or contract services can be acquired. Other options may exist locally and need to be evaluated.

AGING COMMUNITIES

Many areas have aging populations where volunteer fire departments have difficulty finding younger members to replace those who retire. Some towns have experienced a steady increase in the average age of residents; other towns have been created as retirement communities that specifically attract older people. Both of these types of towns struggle with recruitment.

The primary cause of this situation is the steady increase in the aging population in the country. It can also be attributed to the lack of economic growth in smaller towns. Younger individuals leave towns that lack jobs. There are still a few departments in rural areas where retention is not a problem; however, these communities are increasingly the exception. The recommendations for affluent areas will also apply here.

EFFECTS OF THE DECLINE IN VOLUNTEERS

The erosion of the volunteer fire service in America has economic and social effects. The economic ramifications are obvious as towns are forced to hire career firefighters in place of volunteers. The 75 percent of the country served by volunteer firefighters relies on them to be the first line of defense in almost any type of emergency from fires and medical emergencies to technical rescues and hazardous materials spills. Volunteers are the initial mitigators before the arrival of county, state, or federal back-up emergency response teams for all types of natural disasters. Of the over 30,000 fire departments in the United States, 88% are volunteer protecting, 40% of the population.

On September 10, 2004, the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Foundation officially released its Cost Savings Study and Calculator at the National Associations of Towns and Townships Conference in Washington, DC. The study, which was conducted by the Public Safety and Environmental Protection Institute at St. Joseph's University with the assistance of VFIS, found that it would cost American taxpayers \$37.2 billion annually if they had to replace all volunteer firefighters nationwide with career staffing.

Some have indicated they cannot afford to hire career firefighters, and that the services of firefighters would not exist if their departments failed. Others have said that their towns could afford to hire a few career firefighters, but that volunteers would still be necessary to supplement the career staff. According to the Cost Savings Study, an average figure that can be used for a career firefighter's salary and benefits is \$71,500 per year. The actual figure varies by area of the country.

The loss of volunteers would also have more subtle social ramifications. In many communities, particularly small towns, the volunteer fire department has been a social center. Dinners, dances, family reunions and weddings have all been held in the fire station. Volunteer firefighters embody and represent the spirit of the community. They are often the centerpiece in parades. The loss of the volunteer fire service would be a major social loss for any community.

Estimated Savings Generated by Volunteer Firefighters and EMTs in Delaware in 2004

Salaries & Fringes
\$125,591,025

Equipment/Purchase/Maintenance
\$8,553,600

Building Purchases/Maintenance
\$1,017,500

Employee Apparatus
\$1,173,214

TOTAL
\$136,335,339

Source: Delaware State Auditor's Office

RETENTION: *Challenges & Solutions*

People who join volunteer fire departments do so for a wide variety of reasons. The issues of retention boil down to two major categories:

- problems in one's own life, such as lack of time, family demands, emotional problems, or a job change that makes it difficult to remain a volunteer of any organization;
- factors relating to the individual fire department or the fire service itself that drive out a volunteer who would otherwise stay, such as dictatorial leadership or too much mandatory training.

A fire department can often make accommodations to reduce the time burden on the individual volunteer and may even be able to help solve or accommodate some of his or her personal problems. Departments certainly can do a great deal to avoid driving out good people.

Fire Chiefs Jack Snook and Dan Olsen are national experts on retention of volunteer firefighters. In their book, *Recruiting, Training, and Maintaining Volunteer Firefighters*, they identify four characteristics of a volunteer department that are essential to retaining members:

- The program must meet individual needs
- The program must provide its membership with reward and recognition
- The program must provide adequate supervision and leadership
- The program must challenge members

The research by St. Joseph's University confirmed these as core elements to recruitment and retention coupled with the issue that all recruitment and retention is local. Additionally, the needs, leadership, and challenges are all local.

LEADERSHIP

A fire department's ability to retain volunteer members is directly related to its ability to manage its people. Many retention problems can be traced back directly or indirectly to inadequate or misguided efforts from department managers. Effective leadership (See following list) helps retain members as well as reduce dissatisfaction. Ineffective leadership is perhaps the leading reason for a decline in membership. If a volunteer's experience is not constructive or is dissatisfying because of leadership conflicts, the volunteer will most likely quit. There are too many time demands on people today to tolerate a poor volunteer experience.

Most volunteers agree that effective leadership is key to resolving retention and recruitment problems. Effective leaders with character qualities listed above are vital to the success and strength of the department. One thing to remember: leadership qualities and skills are not simply acquired, they must be learned and practiced. They also must be exhibited both in the station and on the fireground so that others can learn them by observation.

By-laws, rules, and regulations are also important. It is the leadership's responsibility to maintain discipline and carry out departmental regulations fairly and consistently. Clear, measurable standards of performance and conduct should be developed and enforced. These should be written by a group representing all ranks and elements of the department. Once these policies are set, the leadership must communicate them to their firefighters. This can best be accomplished by providing all members a written copy, discussing any concerns, and updating them as necessary.

This document will discuss ways in which volunteer fire departments can address each of these areas. This section on retention is organized by the topics listed below

Leadership

Department Image

Attitude and Motivation Research

Cohesiveness

Emotional Support

Training Requirements

Time Demands

Recognition

Incentives

LOSAP (Length of Service Award Program)

Medical, Death, Disability, and Liability Benefits

The Fun Factor

Risks

Relocation

Diversity of People and Interests

Consolidation

These categories are not listed in order of importance except for the first category, leadership, as it is considered the most important.

Leaders must also learn to share tasks and delegate responsibilities to all members of the department. The management must recognize that each member will have different levels of time and energy. Instead of overloading one person with many duties, each volunteer should be used and respected for his or her distinct talents and knowledge. A chief may request the aid of a person whose full-time career is auto mechanics when apparatus needs works, or ask a person with computer experience to work on data reports. The delegation of tasks to all members not only divides the amount of work so that one person is not overburdened, but it also allows each member to take on a responsibility, giving them a feeling of ownership and importance in the organization. This is critical to retention of dedicated, enthusiastic, ambitious members. If their talents are not used in the fire department, they will take them elsewhere.

SAMPLE

FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION BILL OF RIGHTS

1. The right to be treated as a co-worker - and not just free help.
2. The right to suitable assignment.
3. The right to know as much as possible about the organization-policy, people and programs.
4. The right to participate in activities.
5. The right to quality training.
6. The right to sound guidance and direction.
7. The right to proper working conditions.
8. The right to a safe working enviroment.
9. The right to promotion and a variety of experiences.
10. The right to be heard; to have a part in the planning.
11. The right ti recognotion, through promotion and reward.
12. The right to day-to-day expression of appreciation by the management of the district.

Fire Chief

President of the Board

Firefighters' Association President

Qualities of Effective Leaders

- *High integrity*
- *Good communication skills*
- *Openness and willingness to listen*
- *Fairness and consistency*
- *Respectfulness of others*
- *Visionary and communicates the vision to others*
- *Problem solver, not problem creator*
- *Ability to adapt to changes and handle new changes*
- *Identifies and takes advantage of new opportunities*

**This is merely an example and is not a law or endorsed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the United States Fire Administration (USFA).*

However, it is imperative to remember that many people volunteer to escape their everyday lives, and do not want to repeat their daytime job when they are at the station. It is often beneficial to ask members to choose projects, allowing them the opportunity to adopt their own duties. It is important to be aware of each volunteer's talents and needs, while getting the job done efficiently. It is best to strike a "happy medium." If members wish to escape their regular work recruit them to be operational members. At the same time, think and recruit outside the normal box, be innovative. Often it is extremely beneficial to recruit new members for non-fire fighting specialty tasks within the department; for example, a bank employee or accountant to do the financial work, a lawyer for legal issues, a human relations expert to handle personnel problems. Then, treat these non-firefighters with the same respect and benefits as the firefighters. A program introduced by the federal government is Fire Corps, which is detailed in Appendix D.

MANAGEMENT STYLE

Many members have been driven out by problems with their chief or officer's management style. As a result of this and other changes in workplace management philosophies, there has been a striking move in volunteer fire departments across the nation toward participatory management. Of serving volunteers, 58% are between the age of 30 and 49 and another 18% are older. These people are no longer "kids," and many are managers in their own right. They have a lot to offer and must be used effectively, or they will be lost. Volunteers do not want to work for a chief who is viewed as an inflexible dictator. Volunteers want to be proud of their organization and comfortable with it. They do not want a lot of grief while serving.

In a survey of reasons for leaving a fire department, one former volunteer firefighter said, "There is only one way to do things in this department - his way." Another former member was very critical of his chief. Feelings about the chief, as reported in the survey, included perceptions that the chief was not a competent manager; the chief did not respect the time of the members and expected everyone to devote all of their time to the fire service (as the chief did); the chief was tarnishing the image of the department; and the chief was not competent in directing fire operations.

To make sure that chiefs understand their leadership responsibilities in respecting the individual, Benton County, Arkansas gave each fire chief in the county a copy of the book *Volunteer Firefighters: A Breed Apart*.¹⁰ This called attention to the expectation that they should be considerate to their firefighters, and gave the chiefs a better understanding of why volunteers are such a unique group. The intended message was conveyed as much through the act of giving the book to the chiefs as in the content of the book itself.

Fireground Management vs. Fire Station Management

On the fireground, a set military-style structure of command and leadership may mean the difference between life and death. However, at the station, leaders should consider options other than a traditional military style of command. Volunteers prefer more democratic leadership styles around the station. While most volunteers do not respond well under dogmatic or dictatorial leadership, neither do they flourish under a lackadaisical management attitude. Having a "do whatever you want" fireground style is detrimental and no longer permitted under NFPA 1500, Standard on Firefighter Occupational Safety and Health Program and operational procedures whether Incident Command System (ICS), Incident Management System (IMS), or National Incident Management System (NIMS). Having a "do whatever you want" fire station style will cause morale problems. A lack of leadership leads to a lack of direction, and in almost all cases, the department declines.

Democratic/Participative Management

Using a democratic or participative management style around the station may take some adjustment at first. Democratic/participative leadership means that everyone shares in running the department. Democratic/participative does not mean the structure of leadership is lost. The simple way to do this is to run the fire station using ICS. Projects and responsibilities can be divided up and everyone has a place and task to perform. Chief officers (Group Supervisors) should still guide project teams, help them define their goals and project time frames, keep abreast of their progress, and coordinate interaction between them.

There are a variety of ways to include the volunteer in the management of the department, such as designating them to committees (Groups) to run tasks such as prevention, equipment purchases, hazardous materials response, personal protective equipment (PPE), or one of many others. The Groups study the issues and make recommendations to the full membership and the chiefs. Fire departments, however, run into problems when fire chiefs regularly disregard the recommendations of Groups. This hurts the morale of Group members, as well as retention. To avoid situations where the chief may disagree with a Group's recommendations, the chief should provide guidance to the Group from the outset, including the scope of the Group and the degree of latitude the Group will have in the decision making process.

“VOLUNTEER VIEWPOINT”

If you want my loyalty, interests, and best efforts, remember that...

1. I need a sense of belonging, a feeling that I am honestly needed for my total self, not just for my hands, nor because I take orders well.
2. I need to have a sense of sharing in planning our objectives. My need will be satisfied only when I feel that my ideas have had a fair hearing.
3. I need to feel that the goals and objectives of the organization are within reach and that they make sense to me.
4. I need to feel that what I'm doing has a real purpose of contributes to human welfare - that its value extends beyond my personal gain, or hours.
5. I need to share in making the rules by which, together, we shall live and work toward our goals.
6. I need to know with some clear detail just what is expected of me - not only my detailed task but where I have opportunity to make personal and final decisions.
7. I need to have some responsibilities that challenge, that are within range of my abilities and interest, that contribute toward reaching my assigned goal, and that cover all goals.
8. I need to see that progress is being made toward the goals we have set.
9. I need to be kept informed. What I'm not up on, I may be down on. (Keeping me informed is one way to give me status as an individual.)
10. I need to have confidence in my superiors - confidence based upon assurance of consistent fair treatment, or recognition when it is due, and trust that loyalty will bring increased security.

The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs. J. Donald Philips, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan

Members must be treated as part of the organization rather than “free labor.” A highly successful approach to participatory management is the “circle inside the pyramid” organization (i.e. a traditional pyramid organization on the fire ground and a joint planning style “circle” back at the station).

A major benefit of decentralized management is that it relieves the chief and officers from having to perform all of the management duties of the department. As one chief has said, “Everybody that joins has a need to join, and when membership weakens, it’s probably because the people don’t get a chance to participate.”

Other ways to involve the membership in the decision making process include:

- **Voting.** In some departments, the membership is responsible for choosing their helmets, SCBA, and PPE by vote after manufacturers make presentations for members on the various alternatives. In one department, the chief designates the goals and objectives of the department, but allows the officers and volunteers to decide how they implement them. By creating an atmosphere where the volunteer can become more involved, a department is furthering recruitment and retention. The members are making an investment, one from which they will not want to walk away.
- **Assign officers to lead specialty units,** for example, the search and rescue unit, or the communications unit. This provides a multitude of leadership opportunities.

But to repeat, promoting participatory management does not mean losing all discipline or command structure. It is important to have rules, regulations, policies, SOPs, and SOGs that are enforced. Most volunteer departments find that strong but fair discipline helps rather than hurts retention. There is no room for double standards of discipline in the volunteer fire service. It can also improve the relationship with local authorities as well as make the department more professional.

Seeking Membership Feedback

Good leaders always seek input and feedback from their firefighters. An annual “roundtable meeting” where any member of any rank is allowed to discuss what he or she thinks is going well in the department as well as any problems may be a course of action. This meeting can be very important to members because it allows everyone to have input and reflect on the state of the organization. Many problems are resolved at meetings like this.

Broad input from the membership on policies, purchases, and other major decisions may be another solution. One department holds a “Four Cs” meeting where the officers solicit the following information from each member.

- **Compliments**
What do you think is good about the fire department?
- **Convictions**
What are your beliefs about the direction of the fire department, and what is your vision for its future?
- **Concerns**
What current or potential problems need to be addressed?
- **Comments**
Do you have anything else to say about the department?

MISSION STATEMENT

Emergency service organizations must have an understanding of “where they are” and “where they are headed.” To achieve this, it is important to plan the way into the future. This process includes developing a goal, mission, objectives, and a vision.

The following definitions and example will be of benefit as an introduction to the next section.

Goal - long term, broad based ideal to be completed

Mission - clearly defined task to be accomplished to achieve purpose

Objectives - measurable, time dependent, steps leading to completion of mission and goal

Vision - future target of excellence

Example:

Goal - Comply with all of NFPA 1500

Mission - Improve firefighter safety as much as possible

Objectives - Steps to take to achieve this

Vision - No firefighter injuries or deaths

One of a department’s leadership’s prime responsibilities is to define the mission of the organization and put it in writing. A clear mission statement gives a sense of purpose to those who volunteer.

A volunteer fire department’s mission may change dramatically over time. The department as a whole should review the mission statement at least annually to remind members of their purpose and to make adjustments as necessary. Reviewing a department’s mission is another excellent opportunity for management to involve the members in the organization.

When there are changes in services offered, it is important to revise the mission statement and define the role of the member as well as the department as a whole. For example, a recent trend has been adding emergency medical services (EMS) to the traditional firefighting job. While some fire department members participate in both functions, other departments separate EMS and fire protection with members participating in one or the other function. The objectives should be specific, describing services such as hazardous materials mitigation, urban search and rescue, and other specialties. A mission that diversifies over time may be useful for retaining members who become complacent due to the increasingly smaller number of working fires.

A mission statement for an all volunteer department may be different than that of a combination department. For example, compare the mission of the Ponderosa (TX), Volunteer Fire Department, an all-volunteer department, with that of the Cherrydale (VA) Volunteer Fire Department, a combination department.

LONG RANGE PLANNING, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Having a clear idea of the future direction of the department will allow planning where and how to use volunteers. Every fire department should have a master plan and a strategic plan to give it direction. These plans can be based on five or ten year increments. These “plans” state the overall goal and the objectives to be accomplished in the selected time period. They should be working documents and subject to change. The “plans” requires annual review and updating.

Sample Mission Statement for an All Volunteer Department

The Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department’s mission is to be a leading emergency service organization by:

- *Meeting the needs of our community in fire prevention, fire suppression and rescue*
- *Utilizing and improving the dedication and skills of our people*
- *Constantly improving all of our services and operations*

In carrying out this mission, the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department will:

- *Give top priority to firefighter safety and environmental concerns*
- *Encourage the professional and personal development of our members*
- *Work as teams to take full advantage of our skills, knowledge and creativity*
- *Communicate openly and honestly to our members and community to inspire trust and confidence*

Courtesy Ponderosa (TX) Volunteer Fire Department

Sample Mission Statement for a Combination Department

As volunteers, our mission is to work jointly with career Firefighters and Paramedics to:

- *Prevent fires and medical emergencies from occurring through safety education*
- *Control fire, medical, and other emergencies should prevention fail*
- *Enhance the level of emergency services provided to the citizens by the County.*

Courtesy Cherrydale (VA) Volunteer Fire Department

The master plan divides the community into fire management areas and reviews fire control and target hazards in each area. Future growth and development are forecast and compared to present resources and future needs. Resources available and needed for each fire management area reviewed in order to plan for current and future control of the fire problems. Strategic planning looks at the department's organization and places a focus on managing change and organizational performance. Strategic planning performs an organizational resource assessment, defines the service expectations, and develops a planned priority for using resources to meet expectations. Both types of planning lead to the establishment of an overall goal and numerous objectives to measure progress.

Fire chiefs should communicate their long-term vision for the department to members. They should also establish annual objectives toward meeting this vision. By stating the department goal, vision, and objectives up front, volunteers know what to expect. This reduces anxiety about the future by establishing a clear direction, a road map that members will understand and support.

SELECTION AND TENURE OF THE CHIEF

There is considerable disagreement over what the tenure of the chief and officers should be, but there is strong agreement that the criteria for selecting them should be stiffened, and that the selection should not be based only on popularity.

The leadership skill of the chief is the most important factor in recruitment and retention. The chief's personality and competence in communications, personnel relations, and human resource management are vital. The chief is therefore critical to successful recruitment and retention.

The volunteer chief's role has become much more complex than it was in the past. Chiefs must be knowledgeable in technical issues, personnel management, health risks, budgeting and liability issues. The chief's roles include being a counselor, a facilitator, and a family member. Volunteer departments should establish chief officer selection criteria that reflect all areas of responsibility.

While there are merits to having leaders that everyone likes, there is a strong consensus against electing a chief solely on the basis of popularity. "Don't just vote for your friend," said one chief. If the chief does not know his or her "stuff", the members may lose respect for him or her and quit. After reviewing NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, the department should develop minimum qualifications that must be met by those who wish to become chief officers. There is a need for administrative, leadership, and management skills in addition to being a competent fireground officer.

The knowledge needed to be an effective chief cannot be gained in a short time. Most volunteers feel that chiefs should rise up through the ranks of the department. This way they not only gain experience, but also become familiar with the department from all perspectives. They also will have more respect because they have been a line firefighter.

Most departments have an election process as well as minimum requirements for the chief's position. Some departments have evolved methods of choosing a chief that are specifically designed to alleviate problems of bias. Many departments now use tests as a part of the selection process. While good test takers may not necessarily make good officers, testing is commonly recommended as one element of the selection process. In states where many departments are part of the municipality, it is common for the city manager or city council to have the final approval for a new volunteer chief.

In many communities, departments take pride in promoting leadership continuity from one generation to another. However, the mantle of leadership should be earned, and not necessarily passed on to a family member of the incumbent chief, unless he or she is qualified and voted on by the members. There should be no “double standard” or favoritism for family members. All candidates should meet the minimum qualifications.

As the demands on volunteer departments have increased, as well as standards, the pressures on the chief have also increased. Some departments are finding it difficult to find anyone who wants to be chief, especially someone who is qualified. This has caused many volunteer departments, especially in New England, to pay the chief as a full-time or part-time employee. An alternative to this is to hire a firm to perform administrative functions or acquire full or part-time administrative support personnel.

A number of volunteers feel that a chief should have at least a three-year tenure. Not only can it take a year to learn the job, it also can take years to implement new ideas, and turn around a department headed in the wrong direction. Many departments have a one-year term for the chief position, but will reelect a chief for many years if the members are satisfied. Rapid turnover is a key concern, and rarely benefits anyone especially in the area of recruitment. Some argue that the chief position should rotate frequently to allow for promotion, but the overriding concern should be achieving good leadership over the long haul.

SELECTION AND TENURE OF OFFICERS

While good leadership by the chief is paramount, retention is influenced by the quality of the other officers. In most fire departments career and volunteer, the quality of officers is the weak link. The most common quality problems are the lack of essential administrative, communication, personnel management, and technical skills.

In selecting volunteer officers, both their technical and management skills need to be considered. Some departments use the same standards for promoting volunteer officers as career officers (i.e., a civil service exam or assessment center and interviews). Technical prowess is important because it gives the officer respect. However, to be effective, an officer also needs to know how to deal with personnel issues such as discipline, supervisory, or personal problems. Volunteering is often an escape from other life pressures; a volunteer environment where people are not managed properly and problems are not resolved correctly will increase pressure, and hurt retention. See Appendix E for samples of an officer promotional process and officer evaluation forms.

Some departments allow their officers to be re-elected after one to three year terms; however they are not locked in the position, and can return to being a basic member for their own peace of mind or for the good of the department. This allows other members to compete for the positions, encourages officers to keep current, and keeps the officers on their toes. Other departments automatically rotate officers after three years, so no one person is stuck indefinitely with the extra duties required of an officer. Also some departments require that officers be re-tested every three years to ensure their competency. Those who do not have the will to maintain their expertise are dropped. These different policies toward officer tenure all have the same goal: keeping the quality of officers high, retaining the good people who serve as officers, and giving members a fair shot at becoming an officer.

German Township Volunteer Fire Dept.

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Officers Position Description

General Duties and Responsibilities

12/27/00 – **Standing Order 2001-029**

Duties and responsibilities are intended to be descriptive and not restrictive. An individual performing as an officer is expected to perform all the duties listed. These examples do not include specific functions assigned to individual officers.

All officers:

- are members of the Fire Chiefs management team.
- are in a responsible public safety position with their specific assignment being given by the Fire Chief.
- are directly supervised by and accountable to the Fire Chief.
- are expected to perform to the best of their ability.
- are expected to use their best judgment in the performance of their assignments.
- are to treat every person they come in contact with – with respect due the position and the person.
- shall protect the reputation and honor of the department, fellow officers, and firefighters from undue criticism or publicity.
- shall assist other officers in the performance of their responsibilities and in a superior's absence take reasonable action and responsibility for action.
- are expected to be proficient in department emergency operations.
- shall have a working knowledge of public relations.
- shall have a working knowledge of fire prevention.
- shall be capable of leading and directing emergency operations.
- shall set an example for subordinates in behavior and operations.
- shall have a good knowledge of response district and be familiar with mutual-aid areas.
- shall insure all assigned reports are completed as directed by the Fire Chief.
- shall assist with and be responsible for assigned aspects of Department programs/services and complete special projects as assigned.
- shall respond to emergency alarms and be capable of directing operations at the scene of fires and other emergencies.
- shall be responsible for all personnel under their control.
- shall see that all paperwork is in proper order and up to date for their responsibilities.
- shall be responsible for seeing that stations are in proper operation.
- shall see that all apparatus and equipment is operational.

Professional Volunteers Faithfully Serving German & Armstrong Townships



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TRAINING OF THE CHIEF AND OFFICERS

Inadequate training for volunteer chiefs and officers is a common problem. Officer training must be affordable, accessible in the field, scheduled on nights and weekends, and conducted in a time span “that works.” Many departments now require officers to have completed an Officer I course as recommended by the NFPA officer standard. Chief level officers, in particular, should take additional courses in volunteer management and leadership such as the National Fire Academy’s (NFA) Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP), which is a free training program. Officers need to take classes in leadership, and acquire the skills of directing personnel, and managing a group composed of all age levels.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The vast majority of management problems are due to miscommunications, misinformation, or wrong assumptions by members. Volunteers may quit over matters of policy or requirements that have been misunderstood or not communicated to them. Policies and procedures that are in writing and available to all for reference can alleviate misunderstandings. Volunteers may also quit because they feel out-of-the-loop with what is going on in the department. These problems can be avoided by providing regular “good information” to members through formal discussions, postings, emails, and newsletters that are open and available to all members.

Information is not useful if it does not reach its intended audience. The chief must channel information through officers, and officers must channel it on to the firefighters. Too often information coming into the department stops at the top or in the officer ranks. Some chiefs and officers do not share information because they feel insecure and threatened if their people know too much. Knowledge is power. Others who are very control-oriented may keep information to themselves because they prefer to run operations alone without the interference of others. These attitudes are excluding and detrimental to effective communication, volunteers’ morale, and retention.

Rumors develop in every fire department, and innocent rumors can destroy an organization. Good communications stop rumors from ever developing, let alone spreading and damaging the department or a member personally. Good officers know the common causes of communication problems and avoid them.

Communication is more than just passing information to others. It also involves listening skills, including management listening to department members. Active listening means listening to other people with the intensity one reserves for speaking. Chiefs and officers need to talk with the people in their department, trying to understand them, and listening to their problems and gripes. They need to show sincere interest in what the members think and how they feel.

Many departments are moving with the times, as are many businesses, to utilize new technologies to improve communications among members. Technologies that can help you to communicate include:

- **Fax machine.** Faxes can be sent out regularly to all stations. Faxing information distributes it quickly and in a written format to avoid miscommunications.
- **Alphanumeric pagers.** Communication can be improved, and also attendance at meetings and drills. Alphanumeric pagers are also a good tool for distributing kudos messages to recognize volunteers.
- **Electronic mail.** E-mail allows rapid, easy communication to members. Departments should establish group distribution lists that allow a message to be sent to all members or a group of members with one click of the computer mouse.

Information about volunteer management and leadership training courses, including the National Fire Academy’s Volunteer Incentive Program, is available by calling the National Volunteer Fire Council at 1-888-ASK-NVFC or the National Fire Academy at 1-800-238-3358. www.nvfc.org www.usfa.fema.gov

Common Causes of Communication Problems

- *Failure to share information clearly leading to misunderstandings*
- *Failure to share information openly*
- *Failure to disseminate information through multiple channels*

Reliable Communications

Important information should be shared through at least two channels (e.g. by newsletter and pager) to make sure everyone receives the message.

- **Voice mail.** Every officer and board member should have voice mail today. Voice mail systems also allow for distribution of a message to group.
- **Worldwide web pages.** Departments should be encouraged to establish their own web site. Information useful for recruitment can be posted. Many departments have begun to post their newsletters on the web.

Other ways to make sure information is communicated to members include:

- **Bulletin boards.** Information about training, meetings, and orders should be posted at the station for everyone to see. Bulletin boards can also be created on department web pages.
- **Post meeting minutes.** Minutes from business meetings should be posted in the station(s) for everyone to see, and preferably email to ensure communications to members who miss meetings.
- **Issue new members written guidelines** and information about the organization, such as its standard operating procedures, benefits, schedules, requirements, and answers to sample questions that a new recruit may ask.
- **Assign mentors.** They should provide guidance, introduce the member, and be available to answer questions or clear up misunderstandings about policies. Mentors should also be available to coach new members during training sessions and drills.
- **Teach members to communicate.** This type of program helps clear up internal rumors, improves communications among all levels, and even helps some members communicate better at home with their families. For example, Lacey (WA) Fire District #3 hired a trainer to teach its volunteers how to communicate and how to avoid miscommunications.

In areas where the literacy level is low, some members might not be able to read newsletters. More common, there are members who do not read regularly. Many people will never have computer literacy. Therefore, newsletters, computer bulletin boards, and other printed information are often not enough to ensure good communications. The literacy problem can be addressed by verbally passing on information at all departmental functions. It may be necessary to have separate conversations with challenged members. Key information will need to be dispersed through several channels, both written and oral.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Some localities with multiple volunteer departments have established a volunteer coordinator position to coordinate activities among independent departments. The purpose of the coordinator is to assist with many of the day-to-day tasks of running the department, to improve coordination of day-to-day activities, and thereby to relieve the officers of some of the burdens of running the department. This is often conducted on a county or regional basis.

A volunteer coordinator can handle many routine tasks such as scheduling training classes; writing an inter-departmental newsletter; handling issues that affect all companies, such as mutual aid agreements; creating recruitment drives; processing paperwork (applications, incident reports, etc.); and assisting new recruits. The coordinator alleviates the volume of routine but necessary tasks that chiefs would otherwise have to handle. This can help retain chiefs who otherwise might become “burned out” by the time it takes to complete paperwork and many ancillary tasks.

In addition, the coordinator is a central source of information and communication for all of the departments. In combination departments, the coordinator can serve as a liaison between the

volunteers and the fire chief at daily meetings that the volunteers are not able to attend. In many ways, the volunteer coordinator is the “incident commander” of administrative duties among the various departments.

This position may be filled by a volunteer member, but in large or busy systems, it is preferable to establish this as a career position due to the volume of work. Fairfax County, Virginia; Hillsborough County, Florida; Montgomery County, Maryland; Sedona, Arizona; and Lacey, Washington are examples of departments that have hired full-time volunteer coordinators.

ADOPTING DEPARTMENT STANDARDS

The image of a volunteer department is formed in part by the standards it is expected to meet. Many departments establish standards for training and standards for operations (sometimes called standard operating procedures or SOPs). Standards establish a framework for organization and performance, and often instill pride and confidence, which are qualities that are good for retention. The new NFPA 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments will provide considerable guidance. On the other hand, standards can be a barrier to retention if members do not understand their purpose or if they establish excessive requirements.

Training standards are vital to any department, and standards can actually help retention instead of being a barrier if line officers properly communicate the intent of the standards. Standards allow volunteers to achieve professional training competencies. In some departments, however, firefighters are quitting rather than going through the certification process to meet their department’s training standards. They complain that the standards are too time consuming to meet or too rigorous. Line officers must explain to members that the intent of training standards is to improve and enhance skills, knowledge, and safety. Training standards also are intended to establish minimum competencies for all personnel.

In today’s society it is essential that all emergency service organizations develop, adopt, and implement standard operating procedures and guidelines. SOPs and SOGs make operations more professional; however, they can increase frustration and hurt retention if not used properly. Both the department leadership and its members need to live by the department’s policies, standards, and guidelines. To aid in the development of SOPs/SOGs understanding specific definitions is essential.

Policy - A guiding principle or course of action adopted toward an objective or objectives. A policy describes the general principle that will guide behavior. It is a definite course or method of action to guide and determine present and future decisions.

Procedure - Prescribes specific ways of doing specific activities. An SOP regulates the formal steps in an action, and is a series of steps followed in a particular order.

Guideline - A statement, indication, or outline of policy by which to determine a course of action. An SOG is a guide or indication of a future course of action.

Regulation - Is a rule or order prescribed by an authority to regulate conduct.

Rule - A principle set up by an authority, prescribing or directing action or forbearance.

SOPs/SOGs do not describe the technical skills of how to do a job, but describe the organization’s procedural guidance for doing the job. For example, they would not explain how to operate the audible and visual warning devices, but would indicate when their use is permitted.

Many departments have found the following recommendations effective in developing and implementing effective SOP/SOGs.

- Inform the membership as to the need to develop, adopt, and implement SOPs/SOGs, and how the process is undertaken.
- Build the development team. Commit to utilizing task forces, committees, or guideline groups involving the members of the organization.

SOPs/SOGs are most effective when the members of the organization are included in the development process. As a general rule, organizations should get input from all groups potentially affected by the SOP/SOG. A key variable in determining success or failure during implementation is keeping the product “user friendly”.

A volunteer department also needs a mechanism for updating these procedures and guidelines. If they are outdated or incorrect, they probably will not and should not be followed, hence undermining their very purpose.

DEPARTMENT IMAGE

A major role of department leadership is to promote a favorable image of the department throughout the community and among its members. One of the principle reasons that volunteers stay with a department is their desire to become members of an organization with a good reputation and positive image. Conversely, firefighters will want to leave an organization when its image goes sour. There are many ways to promote a good image, such as:

- Instill pride in uniform and the department.
- Train in highly traveled public places.
- Increase exposure through community fire prevention and educational activities.
- Keep apparatus and stations well maintained and clean.
- Inform the public about financial savings generated by volunteers.
- Send newsletters to the community residents.
- Promote the department through the media.
- Improve “customer service”.
- Keep political leaders informed about the department’s progress and problems.
- Encourage political leaders and other community organizations to hold town meetings at the fire station.

PRIDE IN THE UNIFORM

Many departments promote a positive image by encouraging members to wear their uniform in public, and requiring that uniforms be worn at prominent local functions. For example, a department can require its members to wear dress uniforms to all public meetings and any affairs where the members are representing the department. A work uniform can be worn by members at local functions where they are on medical standby like football games, rodeos, and other sporting or community events.

The uniform not only makes a department more visible, but also represents the professional and business side of firefighting. There is a more subtle reason for wearing it in public as well: wearing a uniform encourages members to demonstrate appropriate behavior and professionalism.

The types of uniforms worn today vary from jumpsuits to button-down collared shirts with badges and collar pins. Many younger volunteers prefer to wear embroidered golf shirts. What is important is that everyone looks alike, clean, and professional.

Since many volunteers respond from home, wearing street clothes to calls, they should carry a jumpsuit in their personal vehicles so that they look more professional at the scene. Jumpsuits can provide identification and if marked with reflective striping, improve incident scene safety.

Another source of pride for fire departments is their insignia. Emergency service departments should not allow anyone other than a member to wear their insignia. This not only keeps the uniform an item of pride, but also helps identify members in emergencies and enhances security issues. It also prevents misplaced criticism when a non-member is mistaken for a member. Departments must insist that their members not wear their department uniform or insignia at inappropriate establishments or park a department vehicle at places where the department's image could be tarnished by association.

A department's image may be affected by problems arising because of the generation gap. Values held by the younger generation are different from those of the older generation. A volunteer department with strong paramilitary traditions often has difficulty coping with young volunteers wearing earrings, unusual hairdos, and unusual clothing around the fire station. Volunteer departments that require short hair and prohibit certain styles of clothing or jewelry may decrease retention by having dress standards that all must adhere to - standards that are designed to make the organization appear professional and elite. On the other hand many volunteer departments function perfectly well with relaxed dress standards, and that too, can be a point of pride. Questions on dress styles should be addressed to assess member's feelings about various issues to determine if these issues do, in fact, affect recruitment and retention.

Volunteers should not have to purchase their own uniforms. Uniforms should be provided free in exchange for all of the time the volunteer gives the community. Some departments purchase uniforms outright, while others provide cash vouchers for members to buy uniforms. A suggestion is to provide coveralls to all new members, and once they achieve Firefighter Level 1 status, they receive a full uniform. This instills pride and is an incentive.

PRIDE IN THE DEPARTMENT AND COMMUNITY

Emergency service departments will find that it is easiest to retain volunteers who are truly concerned about their community and take pride in maintaining it. These volunteers will want to ensure that their community has the best fire and emergency services possible.

Involvement in local activities improves public relations and builds pride in the community. A department can sign up for the "Adopt a Highway" program where members work together to clean their area quarterly. Many departments participate in the "Fill the Boot" charity collection program for Muscular Dystrophy. Others participate with law enforcement in the "National Night Out." One department has members attend neighborhood block parties. These are an excellent opportunities for the department to garner support from the community as well as teach fire prevention, current safety issues, or hand out smoke detectors.

Unfortunately, some departments report membership' pride has declined as their communities have grown rapidly and lost the "personal" touch. As members have lost pride in their communities, they've also lost pride in maintaining equipment and the department, and there is less dedication and more problems with retention and recruitment.

TRAINING IN PUBLIC

The quality and visibility of training affect a department's image in the eyes of its members and the public. It is a good way to educate the public about the department and build community pride in the organization. Holding drills in places that are visible to the public assists retention and recruitment by:

- Letting the public know the fire department is training and working for them.
- Attracting prospective recruits who see the exciting part of training.
- Giving the members of the department exposure to the public - a little showing off.

In one case, training in the public eye literally paid off as the fire department's vehicle budget was tripled after the department spent one year training outside, gaining visibility.

DELIVERING PUBLIC FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

In addition to their importance for fire safety, public education and prevention activities improve the visibility and image of volunteer departments. These activities may include displays at malls, fairs, and other public locales; conducting both fire and public safety classes; and performing fire evacuation, carbon monoxide, or shelter in place drills in schools. Programs like "Learn Not to Burn" and "Risk Watch" from NFPA should be encouraged in community schools.

A member of a volunteer department in Wyoming started a smoke detector campaign in which free detectors are carried on all apparatus. Volunteers offer to install detectors for residents. A year after providing the detectors, the volunteers follow up with residents to ensure that the detectors are working and have good batteries. The fire department was highlighted by the media and received positive "PR" because the members actively involved themselves in the community not only by fighting fires, but by providing fire safety as well. Volunteer departments should obtain media time to encourage the International Association of Fire Chiefs' "Change your clock, change your batteries" program. This serves a good purpose and keeps the department name in front of the public each Spring and Fall.

One Texas department develops a pre-fire incident plan for every structure in the community. The department prides itself on its familiarity with the community and demonstrates a high level of caring and professionalism through these visits that also provide an excellent time to test smoke detectors and pass on safety and fire prevention information.

WELL MAINTAINED GEAR AND APPARATUS

A classic point of pride for many volunteer departments is the quality of their personal protective equipment and apparatus. First-class equipment enhances safety and instills a positive self-image. Volunteers pride themselves on being progressive and cutting edge. This can be used as a recruitment tool.

Although many fire departments cannot afford new equipment, similar results can be achieved to an extent by keeping current equipment clean and in excellent working order. Volunteers must take pride in the operation and appearance of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), apparatus, and stations.

Many states now have fire insurance premium taxes that generate revenue to support fire departments. In some cases, this revenue must be spent on protective clothing or equipment. The County fire coordinators in Arkansas have helped volunteer departments obtain funding for improved equipment through the allocation of county funds and a one-half percent tax on insurance premiums. This money is then used to buy needed equipment and fire apparatus. Recently, additional revenue has come from federal and state grants.

Since PPE is vital to the overall safety of the volunteers, departments should explore all methods of funding to ensure it is current and in good condition. There are numerous grants available to support this. Many departments have acquired new breathing apparatus with grants for the Fire Act or the Department of Homeland Security. Often, state agencies such as the Texas Forest Service have grant programs for PPE.

Some volunteer fire departments have found community resistance and even resentment in buying new apparatus, especially top of the line apparatus and large ladder trucks that might not be necessary. Volunteer departments are an excellent buy for their community, but must be careful of an image boomerang from purchasing unnecessarily expensive apparatus during tight budget times. One East coast volunteer department drew negative front page headlines for purchasing the second most expensive ladder truck in the nation in a low-risk community. Questionable fiscal management will not assist recruitment.

DEMONSTRATE FINANCIAL BENEFITS TO COMMUNITY

Informing the community about the high value of volunteers is another way to improve the image and foster the growth of a department. Many departments feel that educating the community about what the fire department is doing and how much the volunteers save the community is a good idea. This can be done through several approaches:

- **Make the department's annual financial reports available to homeowners.**
- **Publish a summary financial report in the paper or in a fund drive newsletter.**

- **Estimate how much the volunteers save the community.** Using this figure, volunteer departments can demonstrate to the local appropriations board the amount the volunteers donate in equivalent dollars and time per year. This information can be reported in the press and successfully used to argue for more equipment and funds. Use the NVFC Cost Savings Study and Calculator available on the website to assist with these calculations.

- **Publish a report on the dollar value of property saved by volunteers from fire damage.** Compute the approximate value of property saved as well as fire losses. These figures put the volunteers' effort in financial terms that are important to the community. Using this data, the fire department generates free publicity as well as important statistics on the fire problem. This again, builds pride that is important for recruiting new personnel and retaining others who feel they have a "worth" to the community.

- **Improve Insurance Services Office (ISO) ratings** to reduce community insurance premiums. Some departments try to improve their ISO ratings as an indicator of their proficiency, as well as a way to reduce the insurance costs in their community. Although obtaining low

FIGHT HIGHER TAXES

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ISO ratings is positive progress for any department, in some areas this “progress” may backfire. For example, in a rural area of Louisiana, some insurance companies raised their premiums to compensate for the loss of revenues they experienced when many rural departments improved their ISO ratings. The local fire departments faced a real dilemma of explaining why the community should invest in a good ISO rating if it does not reduce insurance rates.

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTERS

Another way to enhance the image of the department in the community is to send a departmental newsletter to each resident. A number of departments distribute newsletters to keep citizens informed about equipment purchases, upcoming events, department operations and capabilities, number of responses, ISO ratings, and needs of the department. The newsletters are also an excellent medium for public fire education.

USE OF MEDIA

With proper exposure through the media, a fire department can garner financial and moral support for its volunteers. Remember, however, that the media likes controversy, and may play up problems within the department. Below are some ideas to promote a close relationship with the media, and provide good coverage for the department.

- **Appoint a department Public Information Officer (PIO).** Many volunteer departments have PIOs who serve as the point-of-contact for the media and help put the department's name into the press. PIOs should invite the media to department functions such as awards banquets, dinners, and other fun events. Coverage of these events keeps the community informed about what the department is doing.
- **Fax news releases to the media.** Fax a news release to media contacts whenever there is a working incident. Include the cell phone number for the PIO so the media can talk directly to someone on the scene. Also fax information about departmental special events. Some volunteer departments encourage reporters to train with the department to see how professional the volunteer departments have become. This can lead to a “human interest” story that can promote recruiting. Further, it might be the opening to recruit the media representative to be or assist the PIO.
- **Issue the media fire department pagers.** One department's giving the local newspaper reporters a pager so they would know when the fire department was called proved successful.
- **Conduct media ride-alongs.** Some department let the media ride with them to fires or join them at the fire scene.
- **Provide the media with photographs of incidents.**
- **Request that newspapers publish regular fire department columns.** Some departments get the local weekly newspaper to run a column on the volunteer fire departments regularly, sometimes two or three times a month.
- **Supply the media with public service announcements for the department.** Provide public education programs to local networks-affiliate channels several times a week to gain exposure for the fire department and to educate the public. This type of program can give a big boost to the department in the public's eye.
- **Run special feature articles in the paper.** Area fire departments can have the local paper run a spread during EMS week and Fire Prevention Week showing members and their units. The volunteers and their family members take pride in seeing these pictures.

- **Recruit a newspaper reporter to be a member.** One department recruited a newspaper editor to be a firefighter/paramedic. This can help the department gain more access to the paper.

Remember that there tends to be high turnover of media personnel in smaller towns and rural areas, where the bulk of volunteer fire departments are located. Therefore, volunteer fire departments in these areas must:

- continually court the media to maintain relationships with them;
- secure the placement of department news in local press; and
- ensure their familiarity with the department, its members, and its mission.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Departments that take an extra step to help people in times of crisis will receive a high level of community support over time. The goodwill generated by departments that provide a high level of “customer service” will improve a department’s image and make the department more visible. This ultimately helps recruitment and retention. Several ways to improve customer service are discussed below:

- **Have a chaplain provide post fire assistance.** Many departments recruit a local clergy member to be the department chaplain. In one department in the Plains States, the chaplain responds to all fires and major accidents to provide solace to victims and firefighters. The chaplain also starts the critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) process immediately when needed. The particularly innovative twist is having the chaplain stay at the fire scene with the victim families until help arrives from other agencies such as the local food bank, clothing bank, American Red Cross, or other assistance. The chaplain operates in a non-denominational way when acting on behalf of the fire department. This is an exceedingly kind and helpful service.
- **Expand services to fire victims.** Some departments have improved their image within their communities by providing great “customer service” after fires. A department can provide fire victims with boxes to collect and store valuables and arrange for damaged property to be boarded-up or secured. Some departments provide brochures with advice about how to deal with the insurance company after a fire and how to clean damaged property.
- The document FA - 46/June 1998 *AFTER THE FIRE! RETURNING TO NORMAL* can be obtained from the United States Fire Administration. The website is www.usfa.fema.gov or by calling USFA at (301) 447-1000.

WORKING WITH LOCAL POLITICIANS

Retention problems often arise when local political leaders do not provide strong support for volunteers. Volunteers who feel unsupported have a propensity to quit. To maintain political support work closely with local political leaders to make sure they understand what the fire department does and the level of dedication of volunteers. Invite fire district commissioners or similar officials to department meetings and training events. “That’s part of educating them and making the system work. It makes volunteers feel like management knows what’s going on, and it helps morale,” to quote a chief using this tactic.

Departments should work closely with politicians to acquire incentives for their members and discuss benefits for companies or businesses that will allow volunteers to respond from work. Proposals like reductions in local income or property taxes, and state income taxes need to be made on behalf of both groups.

Every department should provide an annual report to political leaders and the media. The report should be concise but informative. It is the single best way to keep people informed about the department's accomplishments and challenges. A sample Annual Report is provided in Appendix F. The report should include the following:

- department's mission statement
- names of chief officers and members of the board of directors
- list of services provided (suppression, EMS, hazmat, technical rescue)
- number of members (noting increases or decreases)
- call volume statistics (with comparisons to statistics from the previous 5 - 10 years)
- list of major accomplishments in the past year
- list of major challenges for the future
- special needs for the future
- general budget information, including major sources of revenue and expenses
- overview of performance measures perhaps citing NFPA 1720 (number of calls, response times)

Sample Resolution

The Oak Harbor (WA) Fire Department worked closely with political leaders to make them understand the level of commitment and services provided by volunteers. It subsequently convinced the city council to pass a resolution creating a volunteer incentive program, which provides monetary awards to volunteers for length of active service. The resolution said,

"The City and Fire Department Administration recognize the value of the Volunteer Firefighters and the service they provide to the community. The demand and time required for training and incident responses will continue to increase as the community grows and as the position of a firefighter becomes more complex. This time removes the members from work, hobbies, and family. Turnover among Volunteer Firefighters occurs for many reasons and for many, the cause is beyond their control...The Mayor and City Council believe it is important to provide incentives for firefighters to remain active with the department..."

Another way a department can improve its image is to request that local governing bodies pass special resolutions to highlight accomplishments of the department or to commend volunteers. Special resolutions or commendations by political leaders show their support for the volunteers and improve morale by giving the volunteers the appreciation they deserve.

OTHER IMAGE-ENHANCING IDEAS

- Participate in local parades.
- Create a department informational video for display on cable television or at public events. Contract with a local television station to interview firefighters and people the department has helped in the community. Display the departmental video at public events, and give it to homeowner's associations to show at meetings. Another outlet is the local government access cable television channel.
- Hold public events at the fire station. This may include community open houses, street dances, performances, movie nights, breakfasts, dinners and holiday events.
- Host a fallen firefighters' memorial service like that at the National Fire Academy.
- Host gatherings for local political candidates.
- Hold an annual old-timers dinner for former members. This shows respect and remembrance for those who have donated much of their time and energy, and sends a signal to current members.
- Hold demonstrations on smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors, teach fire extinguisher usage, or show firefighting equipment and techniques.
- Send the department newsletter to the public and businesses. This promotes visibility and helps maintain support for the department.

At all such events, the department members should have recruiting applications available.

RISKS

The risks of being a volunteer can be reduced with good training, equipment, and effective leadership. Most volunteer departments do not find members quitting because of the risks faced; however, the chief and the officers must pay attention to risk management not only to reduce injuries, but also to indicate concern for the volunteer's welfare.

HEALTH RISKS

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and other contagious diseases generally have not had the impact on retention and recruitment that was once feared. However, it is still important to deal with health risks openly and routinely, emphasizing precaution. To reduce health risks and fears, make sure that members receive free hepatitis and tuberculosis shots. Issue protective gloves and masks and make sure that members use them appropriately.

Departments should also offer regular health education classes to provide the latest information about health risks and ways to handle patients who are infected with a disease. The department should invite a representative from the local health department to speak at a training session each year. This gives members an opportunity to ask questions and clarify rumors they have heard about the spread or risks of diseases. Fire departments should also follow up with health officials when a volunteer is directly exposed to blood to determine whether or not the patient carried any communicable diseases.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

Fire departments should take every step possible to minimize the physical risks their members personally face while performing operations. Many volunteer fire departments now require medical examinations for their members, either annually or every few years. Volunteers have accounted for over half of all firefighter deaths in the past few decades, and the majority of their deaths are heart attacks. Members who are not fit for active duty must be given non-stressful assignments on the scene or at the station.

Unfortunately, many fire departments fear that they may lose members if medical examinations are required. Most departments only request that a member's personal physician sign a form stating the member is fit for duty. This reduces the liability for departments and hopefully ensures members are in good health. However, many physicians do not understand the rigors of the fire service and may only perform a minimal examination. It is better to have a thorough examination and assign a new member to light duty than to lose a member in a job related death. Examinations should follow NFPA 1582, *Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments*.

Many departments also cannot afford the cost of medical exams for members. Requiring members to pay for their own examination is a barrier to recruitment and retention. There are several ways to address this:

- **Stagger medical examinations depending on the ages of the members.** All members initially must have an entrance examination, but after joining, members under 35 are required to have them every three years; members ages 36 - 50 every two years; and members over 50 every year.

- **Pay a doctor a flat fee for all members.** One department saves money by asking a doctor to give the exams for a \$500 yearly stipend. His costs are much greater than this, so he is honored each year for his contribution.
- **Recruit a doctor to be a member.** Another department recruited a doctor to give physicals. The department pays for laboratory fees, but the doctor conducts the physicals for free. SAFER grants can be used to fund medical examinations.

CONCERNS OF THE FAMILY

Family members, particularly spouses of firefighters, are usually concerned about the risks associated with fire and rescue work. The fear about injury or death may create enough stress within a family that, over time, the stress forces the volunteer to resign. To address these fears, fire departments should do everything possible to alleviate family concerns such as demonstrating the level of protective clothing, training, and safety precautions that are taken to protect volunteers. Some departments invite family members to attend live training burns so that they can see what a real fireground is like. Departments should also provide the family with a written description of the insurance protection and Public Safety Officer Benefits provided to the volunteer and family members in the event of a line-of-duty injury or death.

DEATH AND DISABILITY COVERAGE

At a minimum, volunteers expect the fire department will provide coverage for their family to receive disability or death benefits should they be injured or killed. Departments that fail to offer death and long-term disability (AD & D) benefits to volunteers for injuries sustained while on-duty will face difficulties with both retention and recruitment. There is no question that these coverages should be provided by the organization.

ON-DUTY INJURY AND HOSPITALIZATION INSURANCE

Most fire departments provide insurance to cover injuries and medical expenses sustained if members get hurt while on duty as a volunteer. Volunteers expect the fire department to provide this in exchange for their willingness to risk their own lives to help others. Departments that do not provide this coverage will have a difficult time recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Long term disability insurance (worker's compensation) and AD & D provide coverage for medical bills and lost wages when a volunteer is injured on duty. Unfortunately, many volunteer departments lack this type of long-term insurance. Few volunteers can survive long without the income from their regular jobs

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH AND DISABILITY BENEFITS

The death benefits paid by the federal government's Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB) program for line-of-duty deaths generally are not considered enough, and are supplemented by some state agencies and individual fire departments. The PSOB currently pays over \$250,000. This sum when divided over the number of years a widow might have to support her family is not usually equivalent to the lost annual salary. Fire departments must learn PSOB program requirements to make sure that the required tests and autopsy are performed. In California, some departments offer their volunteers free membership in the State Firefighter's Association, which

provides additional life insurance benefits not available through the member's jobs. Some departments extend the line-of duty death policy to include a non-line-of-duty death. An extension of benefits like this helps both retention and recruitment.

LIABILITY COVERAGE

Many volunteers are concerned about liability. Fear of being sued and losing personal assets exists among some members of the volunteer fire service despite many legal protective clauses such as the Good Samaritan Act to protect volunteers. These fears have caused some members to quit and others to avoid or step-down from positions of greater responsibility. One department had a member quit soon after he inherited some money and could not be assured he would not be a target of lawsuits. Other departments have cited examples of members refusing to be promoted to an officer or chief's position to avoid liability exposure. In one case, a chief put his house entirely in his wife's name to protect his assets. **Note: Liability laws pertaining to emergency services vary from state to state. Each organization must research and consider the laws of its state.**

While some fears are legitimate others are not, although all are perceived to be real. Whether real or perceived, liability concerns must be addressed by departments to avoid scaring away members. No one wants to have increased personal liability as a result of volunteering. Many volunteer chiefs have purchased personal liability insurance for fear that their personal assets may be in jeopardy if sued. In some cases, this is unnecessary because the department carries a policy protecting its members, or because state laws restrict frivolous suits. The chief/president should consult a local attorney to help determine the exposure to this issue.

The best way to alleviate concerns about liability issues that could hurt retention is to consult an insurance representative or attorney. One department has a lawyer make a presentation to the department once or twice a year, and then field questions. Some departments give members a pamphlet outlining the major issues of liability for a volunteer firefighter. Others recruit a lawyer/member to help protect them from liability issues, both by providing advice on ways to reduce liability exposure, and by demonstrating to other parties that the department can and will defend itself legally. If the department believes that there is potential risk for members to be sued after consultation with a lawyer, it should purchase liability insurance for itself and its members.

Varying state regulations can be a problem for understanding the liability faced when providing mutual aid across lines. Legal advice is needed regarding all the jurisdictions to which mutual aid might be given.

RELOCATION

Volunteer firefighters frequently move to new areas, usually for work-related reasons, causing departments to lose valuable members. The loss is even greater today than in years past because of the higher training investment in each firefighter today.

TRANSFERRING TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS

While a single volunteer department usually cannot do much about someone leaving the area for work-related reasons, volunteer departments together can do a better job of:

- **Keeping each other informed of volunteers coming to their area.** The state of Virginia's Office of Emergency Medical Services has a recruitment coordinator who assists volunteers who are moving within the state by forwarding their names upon request to departments where they relocate.
- **Encouraging volunteers who leave an area to enroll in the department where they settle.**
- **Writing letters of recommendation for volunteers who have done a good job.**
- **Letting volunteers know of employment opportunities where they currently live.** This may allow them to stay in the area instead of relocating.

RECIPROCITY OF TRAINING CREDENTIALS

A crucial issue affecting relocation is the need for reciprocity in training credentials among states. Retention of volunteer fire service members suffers when members move to another state and are forced to retake courses because their credentials are not recognized there. In some cases, very experienced and highly certified volunteers have to start their training from scratch when they move across state lines.

Although many states accept credentials from other states as long as the credentials meet the NFPA Standard 1001, Standard on Professional Qualifications for Firefighters, reciprocity of credentials is not universal among states. Also, some states or departments have different or higher training requirements than others and many volunteer departments decide for themselves whether to accept credentials from departments within their own states, let alone from other states. Volunteers seeking reciprocity should have credentials bearing the seal of the National Professional Qualifications Board or the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress.

A transferring volunteer should be required to meet a new department's level of training, but the qualifications that firefighters have already achieved should not become worthless when they move. The following suggestions are made regarding the transfer of volunteer members:

- **State fire and EMS training officials should consider ways to implement universal reciprocity of fire and EMS training credentials among all 50 states.** Recruits would still be required to prove their skills or demonstrate knowledge of local protocols, but their previous training would be taken into account.
- **At the minimum, all states should allow certified volunteers from other states to immediately challenge certification exams instead of restarting their training from the beginning.**

DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE AND INTERESTS

Volunteer fire departments should try to accommodate the interests and abilities of their members. Some people prefer EMS, and others just firefighting. Another is willing to drive an ambulance, but not participate in patient care. By focusing on the strong points of each volunteer, the department can put together an efficient and professional team whose members enjoy what they are doing. This is essential for the retention of members. Accommodation is of course more important where there is an inadequate pool of volunteers. Few volunteers today will have the time to raise funds, train to certification in a variety of skills, respond to incidents, and work on administering the department. Department leaders must use their personnel management skills to direct volunteers to areas where they can best serve based on their qualifications and not expect them to be able to do all things. Use accommodation for the betterment of the organization and to provide better service to the customers.

Most departments also try to be sensitive to the needs of an increasingly diverse volunteer force, and volunteer departments in many places are under pressure or have actively promoted a plan to have their membership become more representative of the community.

FIRE AND EMS MEMBERS

Departments that handle both fire and EMS calls sometimes require members to be cross-trained as firefighter/emergency medical technicians (EMTs). Cross training requirements are very time demanding. Given the time demands of the fire and EMS service today, cross-training requirements may force members to leave because they do not have the time or desire to cross-train. Departments should respect the diversity of interests among its members, and volunteers should be allowed to function to the level that they desire to contribute - not forced to cross-train. However, it is reasonable for fire/EMS departments to require fire-only volunteers to have basic EMS training (such as Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation), and EMS-only members to have basic firefighting training (such as how to use a fire extinguisher).

FEMALES

Overall, fire departments struggle more to retain female firefighters than males. Female volunteers are highly sought as candidates by career fire departments and are often “hired” away. Females are more likely to receive pressure to leave the emergency services from their families and significant others.

There are many women active in the fire service today, particularly in EMS roles. Females comprised approximately 4 percent of the volunteer fire service, an estimated 32,000 members. Also females constituted about 38 percent of strictly EMS roles. (please see reference box on the following page)

The following are recommendations to help retain females:

- **Establish separate women’s restrooms and changing rooms.** If space does not permit this, have signs to have on restroom doors to indicate when a male or female member is using it.
- **Eliminate sexist humor and offensive visual displays.**
- **Purchase uniforms and protective clothing made in women’s cuts and sizes.**
- **Treat all recruits and members equally and fairly, regardless of sex.**
- **Provide females with the same training and promotional opportunities as males.** This is

not only for retention purposes, but it is also mandated legally.

- **Welcome female members and do not treat them protectively or condescendingly.**
- **Develop maternity policies and allow leaves of absence for pregnant members.**
- **Make it clear that sexual harassment will not be tolerated.**
- **Provide sexual harassment training for all department members.**

In today's society are single parents have the primary responsibility of caring for their children. This may preclude them from leaving home to respond on calls, attending meetings, or training. In order to retain more volunteers, the fire department can initiate a child care program. Babysitters are on call if a member is summoned to an emergency or needs to attend training. Some departments give pagers to babysitters and alert them to respond to the home of a volunteer or the fire station where one sitter can tend to several children if needed.

Accepting females into volunteer departments has sometimes affected the retention of their male counterparts. Male volunteers have been put under pressure by their wives to quit their department when an unmarried female joins the ranks. To avoid potential problems in this area, some departments hold social functions that allow the families of the male and the female members to get to know each other.

The U.S. Fire Administration publication A Handbook on Women In Firefighting (FA-128) provides special information about considerations which should be made to help integrate women into the fire service. www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-128.pdf

MINORITY GROUPS

Many officers have reported that their departments have experienced problems with retaining minority members. To reduce the outflow, fire departments need to be aware that members have different cultural and religious identities and accommodate them as feasible. Chief officers, in particular, must consider how various issues may affect each member differently. A department that shows recognition and regard for minorities will promote respect and trust among all members. This is an important ingredient for successful teamwork.

Retention of minority members improves when a department makes it a point to be familiar with the diversities among ethnic cultures, especially the ones within their jurisdiction. For example, there is substantial diversity among Hispanics: Cuban, Mexican, Central American, Caribbean, and South American nations each have its own traditions. The same is true for Asians and many other groups. An understanding of cultural sensitivities and religious backgrounds makes minority members feel more comfortable and helps with minority recruitment efforts.

Departments should also try to accommodate different religious beliefs and practices. For example, accommodating some Mennonite volunteers may require having no insurance on them, taking no pictures of them, and tolerating beards. Mennonites in Arkansas have successfully gone to court to get state certification for use of SCBAs while wearing a beard; the court held that the local fire board could not be sued if a Mennonite is injured as a result of having a beard. Accommodations should also be made for volunteers who cannot train or respond to calls on the day they consider the Sabbath.

RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS

Fire departments must create roles for members who are ready to retire from active firefighting in order to retain them. A volunteer department may have different levels of membership: active, "bridge", and retired. Recently retired volunteer firefighters can serve in the bridge position between the active ranks and full retirement. They can also be asked to respond only to large

incidents when more people are needed, and to act as a bridge between generations by offering training advice. To be designated as a bridge, a member must have been active for several years. The bridge position allows them to remain as members in good standing for several years while training less and responding on fewer calls.

In some departments, retirees take on support duties instead of active firefighting. They operate pumpers, fill air tanks, provide canteen services, and other support duties.

NON-FIREFIGHTING PERSONNEL

Fire departments offer a variety of support positions such as bookkeeping, data management, fundraising, fire prevention, public safety education, public information officer, building maintenance, and apparatus maintenance that can be filled by people who are not firefighters and who do not respond on calls. This relieves operational firefighters so that they can concentrate on training and operations. The role of non-firefighting members is crucial because without them, firefighters might leave the volunteer service due to the burdens of paperwork or fundraising.

Non-firefighting support personnel are valuable, and their retention must be considered too. Unfortunately, some departments do not give non-firefighting members the full voting status of their firefighting counterparts. In these cases, operational firefighters are concerned that non-operational members do not know how to vote appropriately on issues such as the requisition of fire apparatus and personal protective equipment. Highly technical decisions might be relegated to committees with particular experience. The exclusion of non-firefighters from voting privileges, however, may drive out these members and hurt the retention of other. It is recommended that departments withhold voting rights from members (operational or administrative) who do not attend meetings or make other minimum requirements.

“BURNED OUT” OR DISABLED MEMBERS

Volunteers often experience “burn out,” or become emotionally drained from all the tragic incidents they have seen and no longer want to respond to emergencies. Instead of losing them altogether, departments might retain these individuals by allowing them to engage only in support activities or other functions that are less intensive operationally. A policy for granting a leave of absence can also be established. This policy is also applicable when a volunteer is injured and can no longer be an active firefighter.

LEARNING DISABLED/MENTALLY CHALLENGED

Volunteer fire departments try to be a positive force in the community and to nurture various individuals within the department. Some departments have tried to assist people who want to be members, but cannot pass entrance exams or agility tests because of mental or physical disabilities. Although these individuals cannot qualify as firefighters, many are still capable of doing specific tasks on the fire ground or in the firehouse. For example, mentally disabled individuals often are able to clean trucks, rack hose, and assist with other support activities. Physically disabled people often can work in administrative positions or as dispatchers.

There are many departments today that now have members with various types of disabilities; however, some departments have expressed concerns about retaining mentally challenged members due to the department’s liability exposure, especially if a member’s disability impairs judgment or the ability to identify hazards. A serious incident can occur with members who

cannot read warning labels and instructions or have diminished reasoning power. Not only could they make judgment errors that may make the department liable, but they could hurt themselves and others. In considering whether to recruit or retain these members, departments must also consider that the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that reasonable accommodations be made for employees with illnesses or disabilities.

Some departments have addressed the liability concerns by assigning a firefighter to be a mentor to watch over those that need more assistance. Perhaps the best course of action is for the whole department to make sure that a disadvantaged member does not get in over his or her head. Unfortunately, in some cases it may be necessary to encourage those who have poor judgment (mentally challenged or not) to no longer volunteer.

People today are very conscious of discrimination against those with health disabilities, but modern society is also very litigious. As a result, volunteer departments need to discuss the issue of using disabled personnel with their insurance company and/or department attorney and be sensitive to both sides of the issue.

CONSOLIDATION

There has been a growing trend towards the consolidation of volunteer fire departments into regional or county departments. The state of Pennsylvania completed two studies during 2005 that address consolidation. The studies concluded that various forms of fire service regionalization, including consolidations and mergers, are feasible and represent a logical approach to addressing many of the challenges currently facing volunteer organizations.

Regionalization, however, cannot be mandated and cannot occur in isolation. Rather, the promotion of regionalization efforts is just one of several steps that need to be taken in order to preserve and enhance the volunteer services. When consolidating/regionalizing resources, personnel are better deployed, more effectively trained, and used more efficiently than in multiple fire companies.

Consolidation reduces funding and other competition between adjacent departments, improves cost and operational effectiveness, and may increase the pool for recruiting. This is an important move especially for rural fire departments that lack the necessary funds to run an efficient operation. For example, several small departments joined together can employ unified purchasing that is less expensive and time consuming.

Consolidation, however, can adversely affect retention and recruitment. It may force stations to close and merge; and the department name may change, both of which may result in the loss of identity and tradition. Volunteers may quit if they no longer feel pride and identification with a department. This often can be remedied by building pride in the new department, or allowing each former department to continue its identification through symbols on apparatus.

Another issue that must be addressed during a consolidation is differing standards among the departments. When the chiefs of two departments that merged did not agree on credentials, certifications, or requirements, firefighters in the one department were forced to re-train even though they came from the department with the stricter standards. The merger created many conditions opposite to what encourages retention: it increased the training burden by not recognizing previous credentials; it altered the progressive image by lowering requirements; and it did not treat members of both departments equally. The result was a disastrous retention problem.

All potential ramifications of a consolidation must be considered ahead of time, including the likely impacts on each group affected by the change. Consolidation can result in a better or worse environment for volunteers. Some departments hire an outside consultant to provide objectivity and guidance in planning a consolidation. A mechanism such as a governing board that includes representation from each of the former constituent departments should be established to deal with the problems that arise for several years after a consolidation.

ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION RESEARCH

Understanding the attitudes and motivations of volunteers is imperative to maintaining their satisfaction and preventing membership turnover. Attitude research is aimed at determining what members think about their department. Motivation research helps determine why volunteers join the department.

ATTITUDE RESEARCH

Attitude research identifies members' thoughts and feelings about their department. It helps chief officers to identify problems early so that they can prevent problems that may arise and cause members to quit. A member may simply have a bad attitude about the department because of personal reasons that are difficult to change. On the other hand, a member may have had a bad attitude about the department because of unfair treatment. One might expect a volunteer who is unhappy to have a frank discussion with management before quitting; but many choose not to do so, especially if they are disgruntled. A grievance procedure policy should be established. (See section on Handling Grievances)

MOTIVATION RESEARCH

It is important to know each member's motivations for joining the department. If the officers understand a volunteer's motivations for being a member, and help ensure that those motivations are met, the volunteer will be less likely to leave the department. Volunteers should be asked about their motivations before joining to ensure that they have the right reasons. Officers should also check-up on their volunteers occasionally to make sure that their desires and motivations for being a member are being fulfilled. (Refer to the section on motivation research under the recruitment portion of this report for a list of the leading reasons that people join the volunteer fire service).

"We spend lots of time one on one [with members] discussing problems and motivations," remarked one fire chief. This helps the leaders understand the members' needs and make sure that things are in place to keep them motivated. "The bottom line is they like to help people, and they take pride in that," he said. One department almost lost a member whose motivation for joining was simply to help maintain vehicles, but who was being railroaded into other obligations. Fortunately, the problem was recognized and resolved.

Once motivations are identified, departments can design training, activities, or other programs to help members meet their needs. "We must identify ways to meet needs of personnel, both volunteer and career," said a combination department chief.

In combination departments where career personnel answer a majority of the calls, volunteers may lose motivation if they feel like they are not needed. It is important for chiefs of these

Basic Needs of a Volunteer

To feel part of the decision-making process. Volunteers function best when they get to help make decisions. This means more than just an opportunity to vote on an issue in a meeting. Include volunteers in planning sessions and committee work and ask how they feel about issues or problems about which decisions must be made. Let them know their input is important.

To feel appreciated. Be generous with praise. Consider distributing a department newsletter that contains a section that thanks a member or members for a job well done. Send the local newspaper announcements of elections or information about special recognition of members. Volunteer appreciation days are very effective, but demonstration of appreciation should be constant.

To have a sense of responsibility and authority. When a volunteer is given a job, make sure the person has the authority to make decisions. Properly trained, and with clearly written policies and procedures, the volunteer will be able to do the job within the framework and policy of the department and have a sense of pride in the work.

To do interesting work. Most emergency work is interesting. The challenge is to make small jobs interesting. Stuffing fund drive envelopes, for example, can be made into a social event. Recruiting new members can be made more interesting by having a contest. Use imagination and make all jobs interesting.

To have an opportunity to grow. Provide personal growth opportunities for members. A committee member, for example, might move into a leadership role within the committee structure. Challenge members with new jobs,

larger tasks, and an opportunity to influence decisions.

To have effective supervisors. Volunteers should be able to feel that their supervisors believe in them and respect the value of their contribution to the department. Supervisors should have training in how to work effectively with volunteers.

To have a safe working environment. The station should be a place where the volunteers are comfortable, and safe, a place they can be proud of.

To have constructive evaluation. Despite what one might believe, volunteers do like to know how they are doing. This means consistent and fair performance evaluations. Evaluations help determine the motivational climate of the department. Supervisors

Motivations for Volunteering Find out what a member's motivations are for joining the department. A department that helps its volunteers meet their motives is more likely to retain them over time.

Leading Reasons Why Members Stop Volunteering in Fire and EMS Departments

- *Internal conflicts*
- *Excessive time demands*
- *Feeling of a lack of support from department*
- *Perceived unfairness of disciplinary actions*
- *Perceived unfairness or inconsistencies in management*

departments to set the tone from the top that volunteers are an integral part of the force, even if they do not respond on a majority of the calls. To ensure volunteers maintain an integral role, a combination department may assign volunteers the responsibility for handling specific task such as staffing an extrication truck; performing confined space rescues; or providing support services and lighting at fires.

There are a variety of ways to determine the needs of members as well as discern their problems. Insights can be obtained through formal written surveys, informal discussions, or both. Attitude questionnaires and annual performance ratings can be good listening tools as well as measuring sticks of performance. They enable officers and members alike to see their responsibilities, strengths, and weaknesses.

MEMBER SURVEYS

Although most volunteers are motivated by similar factors, it is essential that each department find out the factors that may help retain its members, or drives them away. Each department needs to do its own market research; you cannot assume that your volunteers are like those in the department next door.

One department holds individual annual interviews with each member to ask, "What are the top three needs of the department, and what are the top three personal needs you have?" This information is used in shaping department policy and priorities and in dealing more effectively with each individual.

Attitude and motivation research indicates that members are more easily retained if their motivation for volunteering is to provide a service to the community. Members say they prefer strict requirements placed upon them rather than serving in a department with a lackadaisical attitude; and that it was important to receive recognition for their assistance to the community. This information can help the department know what to look for in screening applicants and what to emphasize in managing the department.

Although surveys can provide useful information, they need to be handled with care. A department found that its volunteers refused to fill out questionnaires anymore after the department reprinted easily identifiable, verbatim quotes from a survey. However, some volunteers want to be quoted and will even put their names on the surveys. The key is to make sure everyone understands the ground rules of any survey undertaken.

Fire department should heed the results from a questionnaire and ensure that action is taken. There have been experiences when volunteers refused to fill out a new survey because the previous one had no impact. Volunteers do not like to waste their time. Find out what is driving them to volunteer or leave. It is a local issue.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Exit interviews provide an opportunity for fire chiefs and line officers to find out why a member is leaving the department. In small departments, officers usually know why a particular member has decided to quit; in larger departments, however, this may not be readily apparent. Exit interviews, therefore, are particularly important in larger departments.

Exit interviews can take the form of a simple written survey that asks members why they are leaving, or they may involve one-on-one interviews. In any case, they should be structured so that

the member who is leaving feels like he or she can honestly discuss the reasons for resigning. The leaving member should feel free to identify problems with management, personnel, time demands, training, or other areas.

Volunteers are actually internal customers. Departments do not need or want bad press so it is beneficial to meet with volunteers who are leaving to give them a chance to vent their anger or discuss their problems. In most circumstances, the parting should be as amiable as possible. Former members who remain in the community are needed for financial and other forms of support. Since much recruiting is done by word of mouth, the department does not need a former member criticizing the organization.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluations or performance appraisals are essential to improving volunteer performance and volunteer organizations. Volunteers may view evaluations as negative events, and they can be if they are not conducted properly. The concept that evaluations are unpleasant should be overcome. The sessions should become a coaching session for the improvement of the member and the good of both the individual and the organization. Effective evaluations focus on improving the volunteer and their contribution to the organization. This can be best achieved by working together on weak areas and determining in the evaluation where the member can better contribute to the department.

Officers can fill out “employee” evaluation forms on their volunteers once or twice a year. The evaluation includes questions on task performance, communication skills, quality of effort, attitude, and knowledge of job requirements. Some departments have the firefighters evaluate the officers. The objective of both is to enhance the organization.

In one department the chief performs annual member evaluations. The purpose of the evaluations is more to discuss than to rate the performance of individual volunteers and to provide an opportunity for the department to get feedback from members. “I talk with every member and they set personal and professional goals, and then we evaluate these at the end of the year,” said the chief. This program has helped retention by making sure that members are satisfied and that their motivations and goals are met. It also allows members to “air out” complaints with the chief on a one-on-one level. This keeps complaints from festering. Sample Evaluations forms are in Appendix I.

COHESIVENESS

Cohesiveness is one of the essential ingredients that makes a fire department successful. Firefighters depend on one another for their safety. It is important not only to work as a team, but also to feel like a team.

Unfortunately, cohesiveness is not always easy to achieve. There are many factors that can disrupt the peace. Cliques can form, groups and individuals may feel excluded, EMS and fire members may not get along, or career and volunteer members clash. Often these problems cause one or more of the parties to resign from membership. Chiefs, line officers, and other members of the department’s management team must try to promote an environment in which members cooperate and work as a cohesive unit to avoid retention problems due to disagreements or conflicts among members.

Sample Exit Interview

- 1. What are your reasons for leaving the organization?*
- 2. What were your most satisfying experiences while volunteering?*
- 3. What were your least satisfying experiences while volunteering?*
- 4. What are your recommendations for improving the organization and increasing volunteer satisfaction?*
- 5. Are there any ways the department can be of assistance to you?*
- 6. Is there any way the department could have prevented your departure?*

Evaluating Volunteers

Evaluations should not only assess a member’s performance but also should allow members to assess the officers and department.

CLIQUEES

Cliques that form in a volunteer department can damage morale, affect teamwork, hurt the organization as a whole, and ultimately damage retention. Firefighters who drop out after a few months commonly say that they quit because they felt like they did not belong. Members of course may form friendship bonds with people of their choosing, but problems arise when these bonds become so exclusive that they bar others from enjoying the camaraderie of the group. Cliques also pose the problem when one member of a clique leaves, because several others may leave too. Cliques can really make or break a person and a department. Volunteers are not required to be best friends with everyone, but they should respect their peers and appreciate their efforts.

There are several approaches that can be used to reduce the problems of cliques. First, it is important to make sure that newcomers to the department feel welcome and not excluded by cliquish groups. Department leadership should also encourage the intermixing of members, and periodically offer training opportunities or activities such as fundraising events with different groupings of members, so people get to know one another better. One department assigns a field training officer to each new member for 18 months. The officer's function is to help integrate the person into the department as a complete member socially, administratively, and trained.

FEMALES AND MINORITIES

Volunteer fire and EMS departments, like all employers today, must learn to appreciate the diversity of people in our society if they are to retain members and recruit from a broader pool of citizens. Departments in many areas are under pressure to make their membership more representative of the community, if they have not already done so. This has expanded the opportunities for females and minorities in the fire service. Unfortunately, gender and race are often factors that create frictions between the established cliques and new members. Minority and female members may feel more alienated than the average new member.

If a newcomer, regardless of race, sex, religion, or ethnicity, is made to feel unwelcome, he or she is likely to leave. Sensitivities should be addressed as a department becomes more diverse. Some are obvious, such as having equal access to bunkroom and bathroom facilities for men and women and eliminating sexist or racist humor. All recruits and members must be treated equally and fairly and be provided with the same training and challenges. It is also advisable to open a channel of communication so that females and minorities have a mechanism for discussing potential problems. Some volunteer fire departments now require their personnel to attend cultural diversity and equal employment opportunity classes to increase their sensitivity as to what is considered offensive, and how cultural diversity can benefit the department. At the minimum, the leadership should make it clear that inappropriate words or actions will not be tolerated.

EMS AND FIREFIGHTERS

Some departments suffer from rifts between volunteers who specialize in firefighting and those who specialize in EMS. This often comes to a head at budget time in departments with both functions. EMS members, who typically respond to three quarters of the total fire and EMS calls, may argue for more medical equipment; while firefighters argue for firefighting equipment. Members from either side may quit out of frustration or spite. It is the responsibility of the department management to control such conflicts. Purchases should be made only after assessing needs and priorities for new or different equipment.

HANDLING GRIEVANCES AND PROBLEM VOLUNTEERS

One of the most unpleasant duties of management is dealing with people who cause problems. How well they are handled can affect the cohesiveness of the department.

Grievances usually can be handled informally. However, some departments have had members leave because there was no formal route for them to take when the informal process failed. Therefore, it is important to have some standard way of dealing with grievances once other methods are rendered inadequate. The grievance process for discrimination, harassment, suspensions, or other matters should be spelled out in writing in departmental policies.

Many departments have trial boards and grievance boards to handle problems. Bernalillo County, New Mexico has a formal grievance procedure for volunteers. One member from each of its eleven fire districts is nominated to serve in a pool from which the County Manager selects four to form a review panel. A pool member cannot sit on the panel for a member from his or her own fire district.

It is often extremely difficult to “fire” a volunteer without causing hard feelings. The preferable solution is to encourage the problem individual to resign voluntarily so that they do not ruin the atmosphere for the rest. If the person will not leave, management needs to decide whether the troublemakers would do more damage on the inside or by criticizing the department from the outside.

When all else fails, termination must be considered. Many volunteers who cause problems have the attitude of “What are they going to do - fire me? They can't. I'm a volunteer. This type of attitude should not be allowed to establish itself in a department. If a volunteer department is to remain professional, its members must know that they will be held accountable for their actions. Although there is a general trend of irresponsibility, there is no place for this in the emergency services. All new members should clearly understand that their actions have consequences.

In combination departments, volunteers and career members should be held to the same ethical standards. If a volunteer does something for which a career person would be dismissed, then fire the volunteer. Dissimilar policies or punishments for volunteer and career members create division between the two groups because one will view the other as being given preferential treatment. This cannot be allowed if a cohesive, team oriented department is the goal.

COMBINATION DEPARTMENTS

One of the most pervasive problems found in combination departments is friction between volunteer and career members. This happens in any of the three types of organization for combination departments.

- The organization where the volunteers provide support for the career staff
- The organization where the career staff provides support for the volunteers
- The organization where specific stations are assigned to either volunteer or all-career units

Encouraging volunteer and career firefighters to work together as a team in combination departments is often difficult. Depending on the type of organization, one group may be a minority and feel lesser than another group, especially if the majority group infers that they are superior. Whatever the organizational form, it is imperative that career and volunteer firefighters work

Ways to Reduce Friction and Promote Teamwork in Combination Departments

- *Have career and volunteer firefighters train together in order to promote intermixing and friendships, the building of mutual trust, and efficient operations.*
- *Treat career and volunteer members as similarly as possible (i.e., with respect to training, fitness, discipline, and promotional standards).*
- *Share maintenance duties of the firehouse and apparatus.*
- *Require all members to pass the same physical entrance exam.*
- *Involve the spouses of both volunteer and career members in an auxiliary and department activities.*
- *Share station chores.*
- *Expect the same job performance and competence from volunteers as their career counterparts.*
- *Talk out issues of conflict - don't let them fester.*
- *Avoid setting volunteers apart unnecessarily by creating different policies or uniforms.*
- *Establish written roles and responsibilities for volunteer and career members (e.g. establishing who is in charge of maintenance/cleaning of stations/apparatus, getting particular apparatus out the door, command at scene).*
- *Maintain good lines of communication with all members so all are apprised of departmental happenings and activities giving rumors no chance to start.*

together not only for good morale, but to provide the best emergency services to their customers in the community and to save lives.

The sources of friction vary, but often are traced back to four sources: a feeling that one group is better trained or more experienced than the other; a feeling that one group is more physically fit than the other; a feeling that one group dominates the other and is unappreciative of the other's needs or opinions; or a feeling that one group misrepresents itself to the public. Friction is characterized by members being openly disrespectful and distrusting of one another. This behavior damages morale for all members, volunteers and career. The department leadership, if it expects to retain the volunteer membership, must diffuse these types of situations.

Many departments have found that the key to good relations between career and volunteers is a chief who is conscious of their differences and takes the lead in working out the problems between the two groups. To be a winning team, there must be a good coach. The chief must not tolerate the formation of barriers that separate volunteer and career personnel. Unabated, these kinds of attitudes can drive volunteers away and force a department to operate with a shortage of personnel.

ENCOURAGING TEAMWORK

Lacey (WA) Fire District #3 actually established written teamwork guidelines to inform members what is expected of them and how to be a team player.

The guidelines include:

- “I/we will be on time for scheduled meetings and appointments. If not possible, I will inform the group beforehand why and when I will be there.
- “I/we will inform affected members, preferably beforehand, of any decision made which affects them and the reasons why.
- “I/we will give specific, authentic acknowledgments of ‘job well done’ frequently.”
- “I/we will solve problems using the appropriate and effective strategies (such as confrontation, problem solving, negotiation, and use of the organizational chain of command).”
- “I/we will not exhibit ‘we/they’ behavior. We’re all in this together, so if I have a problem, I’ll solve it rather than blame.”
- “I/we will understand another person’s story, problem or point of view before I interrupt or draw a conclusion. (Use active listening skills to help them make their point.)”

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Supporting the fellow firefighter has been a long standing tradition within the fire service. When a crisis occurs, volunteers consider themselves a family. This bond can provide the support needed to make it through hard times. Caring about the emotional well-being of volunteers and helping them through life crises are things the leadership can foster to improve retention. Conversely, not caring enough about members may cause them to drift away from the department.

NURTURING NEW MEMBERS

There is a period of emotional vulnerability after recruits join a department when there is a greater chance they will leave than at any other time. Recruits may have difficulty feeling accepted, may be discouraged after their first physically challenging training, wonder how the time demands are going to work out, or resent the first exposure to authority in this voluntary activity. The leadership can play a major role in retaining new members during this period by good mentoring. It is important to monitor new members their whole first year and possibly their second. Make sure they feel welcome. Be considerate.

Top 10 Ways to Turn Off a New Member

This material is adopted with permission from a JEMS eNews article written by David S. Becker, MA, EMT-P.

New members generally have high expectations about becoming a part of the organization. The question is does the organization prepare them for the job or leave them wondering if they made the right decision. The following is a list of actions/inactions that decrease the enthusiasm of new members. Included are some suggestions on how to bring them in correctly.

1. Do not explain any compensation or benefits up front.

New members are excited about the opportunity to join the organization. A benefits fact sheet should be developed and given to all new applicants detailing the benefits and outlining any costs of being a member. Update this sheet annually.

2. Change the duty hours or response conditions.

Duty hour requirements and response conditions should be outlined. If they are going to change in the near future, this should be mentioned to new applicants. Unexpected changes shortly after joining could create lifestyle problems and the loss of a new member

3. Don't introduce them to the other personnel.

Like the first day of school, it helps to have someone show new personnel around and introduce them to other members of the organization. Have a simple process of introducing new personnel to the current staff to prevent those awkward first days in the organization.

4. Assign the most negative, critical, and unhappy member as a mentor.

The first person new members work with usually has the greatest impact on what kind of members new personnel become in the organization. Do not handicap them from the first day by pairing new people with someone who has a bad attitude. If the individual is an officer, the new personnel may never have a chance to become a productive member. Pick mentors carefully and make sure they support the organization.

5. Allow members to degrade new personnel with nicknames like "rookie" or "probie" or worse.

Treating others the right way and with respect is something taught at an early age. However, many emergency services organizations fail to treat all members fairly and this includes no names for new members. There should be an organizational policy covering the use of names and titles.

6. Assign new personnel the tasks that other members view as beneath them.

Assigning new members to clean station toilets or wash apparatus by themselves is not a good beginning. These activities should not be viewed as singling out anyone for "special" jobs. All members should be assigned work tasks fairly. This is an excellent place to build the teamwork concept.

7. Make new personnel "pay their dues" before listening to their recommendations.

A fast way to turn off new members is to ignore their suggestions or views until they have a certain amount of "time on the job." If a new member points out a way to improve customer service or prevent a workplace accident or injury on his or her first day, this should not be

Ways to Nurture a New Member

- *Assign each new volunteer a mentor on the night he or she joins. The mentor should introduce the volunteer to other members; help the member acquire equipment and training; and take the time to call or sit down with the member every few weeks to make sure everything is going smoothly.*
- *Hang a picture of new members on a bulletin board or print their picture in a newsletter.*
- *Send new members a letter welcoming them to the department after they join.*
- *Ask new members how they are getting along and whether they have any questions or problems.*
- *Evaluate the new member's volunteer experience after three months. The chief or an officer should take ten minutes to sit down with the individual to discuss any problems, to answer questions, and do some one-on-one coaching.*

sloughed off. New members want to feel like a valuable part of the team who can contribute to the improvement of the organization.

8. Allow older members to “haze” or harass them.

The previous three topics are forms of hazing or harassment. Doing something to new members’ personal effects, uniform or turnouts, or in some way making them feel threatened cannot be allowed. Often new members will not report such activities for fear of retaliation or rejection from the organization. There should be a no-tolerance hazing policy.

9. Have a sink-or-swim attitude.

Often new members are immediately placed into work situations with the hope they will “learn by doing.” However, if they are not allowed to ask questions about their roles or tasks, this can be frustrating, place unreasonable expectations on them, or lead to serious mistakes. Train new members in proper procedures and techniques to avoid injuries, lost time, conflicts, and resignations.

10. Don’t bother with a good orientation process.

The key to a positive or negative experience for new members will be a good orientation to the organization. A thorough and comprehensive orientation is necessary to obtain and retain valuable members.

How new members are initially regarded affects how they feel as a member of the team. This ultimately affects how long they will stay and how they will contribute to the organization.

NURTURING ALL MEMBERS

Many departments retain people by figuratively, and in some cases literally, providing a home for them or at least the emotional support of a home. This may supplement a healthy home relationship for some individuals or may be a substitute for a home relationship for others. People who are having personal problems, people who are new to a community, and others may relish the warm relationships within a volunteer fire department to fill an important void in their life. Volunteers point with pride to individuals they helped save from going in the wrong direction. In addition to helping the person who is nurtured, the nurturing role also helps the person doing the nurturing. Remember that many people volunteer to improve the quality of their life, to give service, and to help make their life fuller and more meaningful.

It goes without saying that one has to be careful not to intrude into member’s lives where not wanted. Nurturing can sometimes backfire; volunteers may drop out because they no longer want to deal with someone who got too close or who interfered too much. However, that attitude seems to be less common than those who feel they owe the organization a great deal for helping them through a time of crisis.

HANDLING SPECIFIC PERSONAL PROBLEMS

Eventually, almost every firefighter faces a personal problem that may jeopardize his or her ability to serve for a period of time or even permanently. People may quit volunteering because of problems that are not only time-consuming but depressing or embarrassing. The problem may be as simple as a crisis due to time demands or as serious as alcohol and drug abuse. The extent to which the department can help a member head off or mitigate personal problems is a major factor in retention. In today’s emergency services organizations employment practices and related liability warrant the development of Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies.

Capable managers need to be able to recognize when their members are in need of assistance and cannot function safely and effectively. Volunteers should not be allowed to serve if they are incapable of functioning either mentally or physically. They may not only be unable to perform their firefighting duties, but they may also injure themselves or someone else.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (EAPS)/ MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (MAPS)

Volunteers should be given access to EAPs/MAPs that can provide counseling and guidance for personal problems. EAPs/MAPs can also provide assistance after traumatic emergency incidents although in most cases today fire departments incorporate Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) teams in their EAPs/MAPs.

Substance Abuse Counseling

Alcoholism and drug abuse are problems in the fire service as they are in society. Many departments screen applicants for driving while intoxicated convictions as one means of screening out those with substance abuse problems. Department policy must be clear about the consequences of the excessive use of alcohol and using illegal drugs. One department forbids members from responding to calls if they have had even one beer in the past 24 hours. This is not only for everyone's safety, but it prevents a negative image of the department and protects the department and members from potential liability.

Many departments provide their volunteers free access to local government EAPs/MAPs. Some departments have established their own programs. These programs are highly useful for members with alcohol or drug dependencies, depression, and a variety of other problems. An EAP/MAP takes the burden off the chief of having to be an amateur psychologist or social worker. However, it is important to train the officers to recognize emotional and medical problems so they can refer their members to EAPs/MAPs.

Assistance from Chaplains

Each department should consider having a chaplain available to assist members with personal problems. The chaplain may be a less threatening or less embarrassing alternative than talking to a department officer or chief. The chaplain must maintain an image of openness, and be viewed as someone to whom a person of any denomination can talk.

Status Circles

One department has taken an interesting approach to head off emotional problems. It offers members a chance to sit down informally after each training session or meeting and update the others on what has been happening in their lives. Members are encouraged to talk about changes in family situations, a sick child, or an accident - the good and the bad. This not only gives members an outlet to share their problems, it gives the organization some idea about what is going on in its volunteer's lives.

Leaves of Absence

Some members who are going through emotional or family problems, or who feel burned out, should be allowed to take a leave of absence. This "sabbatical period" gives the volunteer time to solve problems and refresh his or her attitude. Chiefs should be willing to offer and encourage members to take leave. Long time, dedicated members may be reluctant to request leave on their own and may quit instead. Officers should watch for the symptoms and grant a temporary leave of absence before losing a valuable member.

Financial Aid

Sometimes a member has a financial emergency and cannot afford to meet it. Some departments make a special effort to help when such need arises. One example involved a member whose son was put into a special care facility over 100 miles away from home. The member's old, decrepit car could not handle the frequent trips. His department organized a small fund drive that allowed the family to purchase an adequate vehicle to visit the son. Another department helped the surviving family of a deceased member pay for replacing the roof on their home, and paid for a lawyer needed by another member.

Some departments set up a fund to be used for emergencies, rather than organize a special effort for each emergency. A department can set up a relief fund specifically designated to help its firefighters after a personal financial emergency. The fund can be managed by a non-profit organization separate from the fire department, and can receive donations for relief work.

THE DEPARTMENT AS A FAMILY

Many departments actively promote a family feeling within the department. The members are treated as extended family and given emotional support and nurturing care when needed. To foster this attitude, one volunteer department placed the slogan "Our Family Helping Your Family" on all apparatus. The family feeling should extend beyond department members to include the families of members.

Some departments have found their family feeling torn apart by bickering or disagreements, making the department a "dysfunctional family". When the family feeling is destroyed, members quit and new members are less likely to join (especially if the department's problems become public news). This is why it is imperative for officers to manage professionally and address problems while they are still small. This again emphasizes the need for strong leadership to step in immediately as problems begin to develop to fairly and justly defuse the situation based on departmental policies. Then, communicate clearly with all parties and members to avoid storytelling and gossip. "Nip it in the bud."

STRESS DEBRIEFINGS

Any firefighter may be exposed to emotional stress as a result of a call. For volunteers, this can be especially difficult since members usually live in the community they serve and often know the people whom they are called upon to help. Rescuing injured friends, especially when injured children are involved, can be very traumatic. There are several ways to help a volunteer deal with a particularly difficult call.

The first line of relieving stress is to encourage members to discuss stressful events immediately upon their return from the scene. Some departments sponsor a meal after major incidents to help their members relax and give them a chance to talk the incident over.

When an informal approach to emotional distress is not enough, departments need to call in a CISD team or an individual counselor trained in stress debriefing. Some departments have a state or regional team that they can call, and some form their own teams. The teams are trained to help emergency responders after a crisis and can help members alleviate the stress involved. Department officers need to be trained as to when and how to call in a CISD team.

A CISD team can be a vital asset to a department and assist in retaining members. The team can provide counseling for problems that arise from tragic incidents or family problems at home. Several department members can be trained to help volunteers undergoing stress or to refer them to the CISD Team for assistance or counseling. If the department is losing people due to stress, a CISD Team can help them work through the problems.

Fire departments should establish CISD teams or know how to access a team before an incident happens. Do not think a stressful incident will not happen in the department. Every department faces a stressful incident at one point or another. Team members must be specially trained. Some states have statewide CISD response teams. Another recommendation is that fire departments appoint one person to be a liaison to a member who has suffered traumatic stress. The appointee should regularly check up on the individual to offer help and to be an open ear throughout the recovery process.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

One of the common laments about service as a volunteer is the increased burden of training. The trend has been for more training for volunteers than has previously been required. This is due to a number of realities that confront the modern firefighter.

- Danger does not make distinctions between volunteer and career firefighters.
- Higher national training standards, designed to increase safety awareness and establish minimum competencies at various training levels, have required training classes that are more frequent and/or longer in duration.
- The public now expects fire departments to be able to respond to emergencies of all types [fire, EMS, technical rescue, hazardous materials, natural disasters, and now Chemical, Biological, Radiation, Nuclear, Explosive (CBRNE)].
- There has been an increase in the number of government-mandated courses, such as the National Incident Management System, hazardous materials awareness, and for some departments confined space.
- More hazardous materials are in use, production, storage and transportation posing greater dangers to firefighters.
- Fire, EMS, rescue, and hazardous materials curriculums are constantly revised to reflect newer techniques and safer practices.
- Services have been expanded or upgraded, such as from basic life support to advanced life support, or from awareness to developing a hazardous materials or technical rescue team.

As previously mentioned, the increased training requirements, although having the good intentions of making operations safer and more effective, have greatly increased the time demands imposed on volunteers. New training requirements have been particularly traumatic for long term members who have no certifications and are no longer allowed to run certain calls without updating their training.

THE DILEMMA OF REDUCING TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Many departments report that the requirements of today's training standards are too demanding and cause members to quit. At the same time, many volunteers feel that the higher standards have

increased the professionalism and pride of the volunteer fire service. The great dilemma is that while the standards have increased professionalism and safety (which help retention), they have created a major barrier for recruitment and retention because the requirements are very time demanding.

Training requirements vary from state to state, but some states have adopted the NFPA 1001 Standard for Firefighter I and Firefighter II basic training as well as the Department of Transportation (DOT) Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training.

Basic training is needed to ensure that firefighters know how to perform certain tasks in a safe and efficient manner. However, training standards should not be set so high that they discourage volunteerism. Ways to make them more tolerable include:

Ways to Make Training Less Burdensome and More Fun

- *Schedule training in advance for the entire year and issue training calendars.*
- *Train in modules and utilize the training in context approach.*
- *Ensure instructors are competent.*
- *Offer remedial help as necessary.*
- *Diversify instruction.*
- *Send members to out-of-town training events.*
- *Reimburse members for training expenses.*
- *Hold realistic training competitions.*
- *Hold more live fire training.*
- *Offer web-based training that can be taken conveniently.*

- **Reduce initial training requirements** by devising a multi-year training ladder for members (e.g., Firefighter I the first year, Firefighter II the second year, and so forth).

Put the members on a career ladder training regimen. Samples of modular training programs are provided in Appendix G.

- **Require advanced officer courses only for officers.** Firefighters should not be required to reach the same training level required of officers.

- **In combination fire/EMS departments, eliminate the requirement for volunteers to cross train.** Do not require EMT only members to certify as firefighters, or vice versa. However, provide a short 10-15 hour course to familiarize EMTs with firefighting equipment and safety and vice versa for firefighters. This type of program has been adopted by volunteers in Arlington, Virginia. A sample Introductory Program can be found in Appendix G from the Texas State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association.

- **Incorporate mandated annual training into existing training modules.** It is difficult to avoid training requirements mandated by the federal government. For example, OSHA-required annual breathing apparatus training could be incorporated into a smokehouse or maze drill without creating an extra burden, and without requiring an entirely separate SCBA drill.

- **Reduce training requirements for new members who were previously trained elsewhere.** Create a fast-track so that they do not have to retrain or spend as much time as a recruit. Some states allow individuals to forego certain training if they can pass a written and/or practical test. Give consideration to firefighter/EMTs who have national certification with IFSAC, the Pro-Board, or the National Registry. Some also allow health care professionals to challenge EMT tests without taking the course.

- **Allow recruits to ride apparatus before they obtain formal training certifications.** This helps to sustain their enthusiasm while they spend the initial months in the classroom. By participating early, they "catch the bug", get caught up in the excitement of the job, and are more willing to continue their training. Before riding, however, recruits should be given basic Incident Command familiarization, know how to properly use their protective clothing, work as a team in the accountability system, and understand scene and apparatus safety that includes hazardous materials awareness and infectious disease training.

PROVIDE TRAINING SCHEDULES

With all the time pressures facing volunteers, one of the most important steps a department can take to help volunteers manage time is to provide them in advance with a training schedule. Volunteers prefer to train at a set time scheduled long in advance so that they can plan around it. Successful volunteers build their lives around their training schedule. Some departments go so far as to issue a training calendar for a full year at a time to help volunteers prepare.

Training should also be offered at convenient times. Many departments have begun to schedule the same training session two times per week or month so that volunteers can pick the one most convenient.

Fire departments should adjust training at times favored by the local community for recreational activities, such as the hunting, fishing, or athletic seasons.

TRAINING IN MODULES

A few departments offer short courses that can be taken over an entire week. The larger the block of time required for training, the more of a barrier it is. When scheduling training, the department should consider that many volunteers cannot take time off from work to train for weeks at a time. Training should be divided into modules that better fit the volunteer's time availability. This is generally three or four hour blocks. Three hour blocks work well for evenings while four hour blocks fit weekend sessions. If there are night shift workers on the department, daytime classes may be needed. However, if enough volunteers prefer to take a short, compacted course, the department should provide it.

TRAINING IN CONTEXT

There are many creative ways to reduce the burden of training. Training is not perceived as a burden if it is wanted. To be wanted, training must be on topics considered important to the volunteer, and it needs to be well-presented, progressive, and include student involvement and activities.

A new training concept that many departments are beginning to embrace is called training in context. This approach involves training using specific operational scenarios and provides more realistic training. Training in context allows students to combine skills they learned in a basic firefighting class (e.g. raising ladders, advancing hose, donning an SCBA, pumping) into a mock scenario. For example, one department gathers its engines and tankers in a school parking lot and gives the officers of the units the scenario that there is a fire in the school with trapped occupants. This type of training scenario allows students to put to use many of the skills they have learned, is more fun than practicing one skill alone, and seems highly relevant to them. This can serve as a pre-fire planning session as well when local structures are used. It also can be a good evaluation tool.

It is important to have multiple, good training sessions to keep interest and motivation high. Smaller departments with fewer calls actually need to train more to reduce skill degradation and maintain both readiness and morale. Departments that train three to four times a month seem to have less retention problems. Nassau County, New York, has a very large volunteer population and minimal recruiting worries. This is partially due to the activity at the County Fire Academy. Most of the training is hands on with multiple scenarios available to improve skills. Training can be a plus to recruiting if it keeps the members busy with activity based drills.

INSTRUCTOR COMPETENCY

Another aspect of the training problem is the lack of competent instructors. Some volunteers quit because they are not learning quickly enough, or because they feel their instructors are incompetent. Instructors for volunteer departments should be state or nationally certified and teach from standardized curricula; however, requiring certification may eliminate some who otherwise are

capable. Whatever the case, students should be given the opportunity to evaluate instructors and offer constructive criticism. Feedback from students will help an instructor learn what areas of instruction he or she may need to improve.

PROVISION OF REMEDIAL HELP

Some people struggle to pass written exams but have extremely good practical skills. Without outside help to prepare for a written exam, these recruits may become frustrated and quit, or simply avoid ever taking a class that utilizes written tests. Failure to pass a written exam may exclude them from volunteering, even though they would be outstanding firefighters. Remedial instruction and special assistance should be offered to help these individuals get through exams.

DIVERSIFYING INSTRUCTION

Many volunteers grow bored with training over time, especially if they have to attend the same class year after year. Ongoing training is imperative; likewise, repeating drills is necessary to maintain skills. The trick to making training less of a burden is to diversify it. Several of the approaches being taken today by departments are:

- **Utilize outside instructors from other departments or training agencies.** Outside instructors bring a new perspective and teaching approach.
- **Review actual case studies of fires across the country.** Everyone is interested in discussing big fires. Discuss the fire or major incident and the lessons learned. Training videos that review fire scenes are widely available. The U.S. Fire Administration also publishes major fire incident reports.
- **Rotate the location of the training among stations or training facilities.**
- **Invite special guest speakers** (such as a power company official to discuss electrical hazards).
- **Recruit doctors or nurses to instruct EMS members.**
- **Train in conjunction with other departments in multi-company drills.**
- **Ask a variety of members to teach occasionally or for a specialty class.** This usually results in a wider variety of teaching methods and topics. It encourages more members to become involved in training, and makes for better students once the member/trainers see how difficult it is to teach.
- **Train in context.** Use scenario based exercises once the basics have been learned.
- **Broaden/diversify training topics.** Some departments have created specialty teams such as technical rescue teams, hazmat teams, or search and rescue teams. Some department provides whitewater and rope rescue training to their members. This improves the department's rescue capabilities but also helps retention because members enjoy it and consider it to be a "recreational training." Although some departments may see diversification of training as a hindrance because it increases the training demands, some members enjoy the challenges of new or specialized training and take pride in being on a specially trained team.

OUT OF TOWN TRAINING WEEKENDS

One of the best ways to make training more enjoyable and compact is to participate in training weekends. Many departments or state training offices offer training weekends at a central training center. Members travel to the site and spend the day training, and then can enjoy relaxing together in the evenings. This type of training is particularly effective for short courses such as

vehicle extrication or rope training. Volunteers enjoy the idea of getting out of town, completing a course in one weekend, and having time to socialize. As an incentive to participate in this type of training, many departments cover the costs of travel, lodging, and meals. Often, wives and children make the trip to make it a weekend of family enjoyment.

Larger departments or mutual aid districts may wish to charter a bus to send volunteers who meet certain activity requirements to special training sessions or fire department conferences. The department(s) pays for all travel expenses.

Volunteer firefighters are also eligible to attend the National Fire Academy's free Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP) training week, which is held semi-annually in Emmitsburg, Maryland. For more information about this program, call the Academy at 1-800-238-3358 or visit the following page of the USFA website: <http://usfa.fema.gov/training/nfa/resident/vip/>.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRAINING EXPENSES

Sometime volunteers must sacrifice not only time to attend training but their own out-of-pocket money to pay for travel expenses such as gasoline, meals, lodging, and even course registration fees. Given the demands already placed on volunteers, it is unfair to expect them to pay for training expenses. Since volunteers are expected to attend training, fire departments and/or municipal governments should be expected to reimburse the volunteers for all of these costs. When these expenses are not covered, volunteers may grow frustrated and quit. Consider a policy to provide volunteers a per diem to cover expenses on the days they train, whether the training is local or out of town. Most departments purchase meals for volunteers any time that training lasts to or through a mealtime.

TRAINING COMPETITIONS

Several departments make training a fun activity by holding competitions. The competitions create an atmosphere of challenge and require everyone to maintain proficiency, something akin to the "Firefighter Combat Challenge" in which firefighters compete against the clock in various skills. To make training competitions more fun, invite the public to attend.

Competitions for training purposes must adhere to strict safety and standard operating procedures. Participants must be physically fit or doctor certified before performing strenuous drills. All evolutions must be performed according to accepted good practices. Horseplay, clowning around, unsafe acts, and inattentiveness cannot be tolerated. Instructors must oversee all exercises and sufficient safety officers must be in place. An emergency medical team should be on location. Winners can be awarded recognition items (trophies, uniform patches) or prizes such as expenses paid to a training conference. Competition training can be used to improve teamwork within units of the department.

TIME DEMANDS

Despite all our labor-saving devices, the time pressures of modern life seem to be increasing. It is important for members to perceive that their time as a volunteer is well-spent and that they are making a valuable contribution to the community. Volunteers may re-evaluate their time commitments in light of the quality of their experience as a volunteer. The leadership must be aware of these attitudes, especially for young members and those with children, because their time is particularly stretched.

Emergency services leadership must take note of the following principles of time demand:

- **Excessive up-front time demands** (such as those associated with training of new members) are a barrier to recruitment.
- **Members quit when time demands grow unbearable.** Time demands are viewed as unbearable if they are poorly scheduled or require an excessive amount of time to complete.
- **Members quit when classes, meetings, and other functions are scheduled in an inflexible, short-notice way, so that they cannot plan around them.**
- **Fire departments must structure the requirements of training, meetings, and other tasks so that volunteers can keep their time priorities in this order: family, job, volunteering.** Otherwise their family members or bosses will begin to nag them and they will quit.

The previous section discussed ways to reduce the training burden. This section discusses other approaches to make time demands more acceptable, reduce time demands, and make the four principles listed above a reality.

Among the ways to make the time demands of volunteering more bearable are:

- Evaluate requirements to assess whether they are really necessary or too demanding
- Assess ways by which activities could be done in a more time efficient manner
- Narrow assignments so that individual members have fewer responsibilities that are easier to meet
- Delegate tasks so that all members share the time demands of running the department
- Assign members to duty shifts
- Allow volunteers to take leaves of absence instead of quitting when time pressures at home or work are acute.
- Screen out non-emergency calls at the dispatch center to avoid the time demands associated with these calls
- Issue fines or penalties for excessive false alarms by automatic alarm systems (if permissible)
- Involve the family in fire department operations, administration, fundraising, or other roles
- Involve the family in social events and encourage family members to hang around the station
- Page out only members who are absolutely needed for a call.
- Recruit members who work at night to assist with responses during the weekday hours
- Recognize employers who allow members to leave work to respond to calls
- Create a pool of substitute volunteers to fill-in when a member cannot volunteer
- Hire career staff as necessary to supplement volunteer personnel
- Offer time management courses for volunteers

EVALUATING REQUIREMENTS AND IMPROVING EFFICIENCY

Fire departments should annually evaluate activities and requirements to assess whether they can be done in a more time efficient manner. Time demands can be reduced somewhat by analyzing tasks to see if they can be done with less labor. For example, are there more efficient ways to raise funds? What meetings are unnecessary and can be eliminated? Can meetings be combined into one night so that members do not have to spend three nights a week at the fire station? Use an agenda to run the necessary meetings more efficiently.

The amount of time required to raise the needed funds to support the department are becoming a recruitment detriment. Alternative methods should be explored such as forming taxing fire districts or using support personnel to do fund raising. In Lancaster County, PA, it is estimated that 90 percent of the departments' budgets must be raised. It is difficult to do the required training, respond to emergencies, and then be expected to raise funds as well. In this busy, changing world, this is creating a drain on the volunteer system.

A department that required all new members to become firefighter/EMT cross trained in their first year before they were considered full status operational members noticed the number of new members entering the department dropped dramatically, the department evaluated the time demands associated with these requirements and reduced the requirements so that recruits could choose to take either firefighter or EMT in the first year. The department also changed operational guidelines so that members could be full status fire or EMS members depending on the course taken.

An annual evaluation might reveal that an increasing volume of emergency calls has resulted in excessive time demands on volunteers. In this case, it is reasonable for the department to consider going to volunteer duty shifts for emergency response (See Duty Shifts Section). If daytime response is dangerously low or other special needs develop, a department may consider hiring career firefighters to assist with certain phases of the operations (administration, firefighting only, EMS only, or a combination of these). The other alternative is to use mutual aid. These alternatives may alleviate time demands on volunteers sufficiently to keep them in the department.

NARROWING ASSIGNMENTS

An important way to alleviate some of the time burdens on volunteers is to reduce the amount of assignments.

- **Reduce operational responsibilities.** Older members may be restricted to support functions. This reduces risks as well as training requirements. Many departments elsewhere have separate EMS and firefighting sections so a member does not have to be cross-trained. However, departments that operate this way may be forced to recruit more volunteers.

One city keeps its volunteer workload low by having EMS provided by a third party. The fire department handles 1,200 calls a year. If volunteers were responsible for EMS, the call volume would be much higher and time demands much greater.

- **Delegate tasks.** In the past, the glue that held many fire departments together was a few individuals who assumed a high level of responsibility for running the department on a day-to-day basis. They often wore various hats to make sure every task was completed. A chief may have been responsible for managing the overall department, responding to calls, ensuring apparatus was maintained, and organizing fund drives. This altruism was commendable but often led to burnout of the chief or reduced interest by volunteers because he was trying to do too much. To avoid burnout, responsibilities should be divided up and delegated to all of the members, and individual assignments should be narrowed. Most departments that do this have found that members take greater interest and ownership in the department as they take on new responsibilities. There is now available an excellent way to do this within the emergency services. Manage the department in the same manner as the incident scene using ICS. Sections, branches, and divisions and groups can be established for administrative and support functions with personnel assigned to the various roles, given responsibility, and held accountable. Everything from fund raisers to work nights can be organized with ICS. The side benefit is that ICS then becomes second nature and operating at emergencies much better organized.

- **Recruit support volunteers.** Many volunteer fire departments today recruit members to serve in administrative and other non-firefighting capacities. The following is a list of positions that can be filled by non-firefighting personnel:

- Fire Prevention Staff
- Public Fire & Safety Education Staff
- Safety Officer
- Public Information Officer
- Public Relations Officer
- Facility and Equipment Maintenance
- Clerical
- Fund Raising
- Customer Service
- Grant Writer
- Computer Experts
- Graphics Developer
- Administrator
- Accountant Auditor
- Financial Advisor
- Legal Advisor
- Human Resources Advisor

This practice helps reduce the responsibilities for each volunteer. It also allows people physically unable or unwilling to be a firefighter to do something useful in the department. These support role volunteers should be given full membership status with voting rights like their operational counterparts. (see Appendix D on Fire Corps)

A department can also use Outside Support (OS) and Limited Operational (LO) personnel on the fireground to assist. OS staff can fill roles in:

- Safety
- PIO
- Communications
- Air Supply
- Logistics

While LO staff can be involved with:

- Driving - Depending on SOP
- Pump/Aerial Operation
- Water Shuttle Operations

DUTY SHIFTS

Research has found that many volunteers, especially younger ones who are dating or just starting families, are more willing to devote a fixed rather than open-ended amount of time each month to volunteer work. Their constraints can be met by using duty shifts.

Duty shifts help retention by limiting time demands placed on volunteers. Volunteers are on call or in the station only during assigned time periods. They are not obligated to respond during non-assigned periods. Duty shifts remove the burden of having to be available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year.

Volunteer fire departments have used the duty shift system for years, but many volunteer organizations are just finding out the benefits of it. The system requires volunteers to be available for specific time periods (a full day, a night, or several hour periods) per week or month. On assigned shifts, individual volunteers are expected to be either at the station or available to respond from home. Volunteers are free and not obligated to respond during non-assigned time periods. Members can plan around their duty periods and become more focused when they are at the station or on call. They do not have to worry about not being around during certain time periods, and they don't feel guilty about leaving town.

A drawback of using shifts is that the total number of members may have to be increased to have enough staffing for each shift. The shift system may also require spending money for additional equipment and insurance for the additional members. The Emmaus, PA, Fire Department has a unique shift system that includes many members who do not reside in the Borough. Members are in the station for 8-hour shifts, longer at night, and are paid for half the time they are on their duty shift. This assures that there is an on-duty crew at all times.

An example would be to assign volunteers to a specific station for one duty shift per week. Four members are assigned each shift and depending on the situation may be at the station or on call. Some volunteer stations do not have sleeping quarters so night shift personnel may be on call during sleeping hours. Ideally, it would be great to have three shifts that compliment local worker shifts that are usually 7 - 3, 3 - 11, and 11 - 7; thus, station duty from 6:30 AM till 2:30 PM, 2:30 PM till 10:30 PM, and 10:30 PM till 6:30 AM. However, in the real world this is rarely possible. Therefore, workable hours should be developed by each department to meet its circumstances. A probable solution is a combination of hours assigned at the station and hours on call. For example, the department night shift might be at the station from 6:00 till 10:30 PM and on call at home till 6:30 AM (People who work 7 - 3 or 8 - 5). See sample schedule.

Two objectives were attempted with this example:

1. Coverage during the morning and evening commutes.
2. A duty shift in the station for at least 3 hours every 12 hours (day/night) to check equipment and assure that all units are in service, perform preventive maintenance inspections and work, and complete miscellaneous duties.

This example does not take into consideration all the exceptions that can occur such as being held over to work overtime, traffic delays, or untimely weather.

The duty shift system will help a department retain members. As a sign of appreciation, the department buys meals for volunteers while they are on duty. A Virginia department has 18 duty shifts allowing members to divide in-station standby duties so that no one is overwhelmed.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Members may quit when time demands from the department, home, or work grow overwhelming. Sometimes this happens because members become over-committed and stressed out, and other times because they feel guilty for not meeting the time requirements of the department.

As previously noted under the section on emotional support, every fire department should allow members to take extended leaves of absence from all fire department activities. Obviously, the duration of the leave must be limited to avoid the loss of certifications from failure to attend training. Offering members the opportunity to take a six month leave may allow them to survive the stressful period without completely quitting. Members are less likely to feel guilty about taking the leave if it is offered as a policy to all members.

Sample Combination System Duty Shift

The department has career officers who work a 24-hour shift. Two career firefighters work week days and are responsible for apparatus and equipment maintenance and training. One works from 6 AM to 5 PM, while the other works 7 AM to 6 PM. Three volunteers are assigned (and compensated) to be in the station from 6 PM to 6 AM. This assures in-station coverage around the clock. Volunteers are assigned on weekends.

SCREENING CALLS AND ALARM MALFUNCTIONS

Unnecessary calls only add to the volunteer workload. Additional time away from work or family is undesirable and should be limited.

- **Screen calls at the dispatch center.** Dispatch centers should screen out calls that are not true emergencies or service calls and help citizens find other agencies to deal with their problems. Some departments use emergency dispatch protocols, systems of questions dispatchers can read from cards to triage and screen calls.
- **Respond only to life-threatening calls.** One volunteer fire department decided to send a fire unit only on EMS calls that are potentially life threatening instead of all EMS calls. Implementing this system reduced the fire department's EMS responses by 25 percent. Emergency call center dispatchers determine potentially life threatening incidents using predetermined categorical protocols.
- **Implement fines for alarm system malfunctions.** As the number of automatic alarm systems installed in homes and businesses increases, so do mistaken alarm activations. Adopt an alarm policy to fine alarm system owners after a set number of malfunctions. Departments can also require alarm system owners to register their systems with the fire department and to present periodic certificates of inspections by a qualified alarm inspector. Inspections can eliminate responses caused by problems with system maintenance.
- **Educate the public about the proper use of fire and emergency medical services.** The U.S. Fire Administration's "Make the Right Call" public education program provides local fire and EMS departments with free campaign materials to instruct citizens about the proper use of 9-1-1, especially in regards to EMS calls.

***Caution: NEPOTISM** Although family teams can have a benefit by keeping the group together for longer time periods, family groups can cause severe problems within the organization. Problems can occur in administrative, financial, and management areas. Records indicate that one of the highest liability losses for fire departments comes from family theft, embezzlement, and fraud. Managing family members, especially disciplining, is often another area of concern. As the saying goes, "Blood runs thicker than water." It is best not to have family members in direct supervision of one another, serving on the same Board of Directors, working as a financial team, or on the same committees.*

INVOLVING THE FAMILY IN THE DEPARTMENT

Departments across the country report that members are quitting because the time demands of volunteering are taking away from family time. A good way to address this problem and retain these members is to include their families in as many fire department activities as possible. This coordinates family time demands with fire department activities and increases time with the family.

- **Recruit husband and wife teams, and even older children.** The family can be included in everything from operations to administrative support functions. Often, non-operational members can join the department's auxiliary. Auxiliaries, usually the wives of responders, are a support group to provide the organization with food and drinks during long operations, assist with funding activities, and become involved in other activities such as public fire and safety education. By including the family, the spouses and children are left at home less often, and feel less abandoned.
- **Encourage members to help one another and one another's families while off duty.** Members may get assistance or discounts from another member who is a plumber, electrician, dry cleaner, or simply help moving. It makes people feel good to have a large group that they can rely on.
- **Hold family orientation nights or dinners.** This is similar to back to school nights to familiarize family members with the department and to allow them to meet other families. This is also a good time to recruit family members to help with support or auxiliary duties.
- **Encourage members to include family members in decisions about their involvement in department activities.** Any volunteer who is considering taking a special fire department class or running for a leadership position should consult family members first because the new activity or position will take away from family time. Some departments send a department

representative to meet with the spouse and family to explain the important role of the volunteer, the need for service, department policies, and the value to the community. Families may be more willing to make sacrifices knowing they are playing an important role.

- **Involve the family in critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) training.** Since family members of firefighters and EMTs will have to deal with repercussions of stressful emergency incidents, they should be trained to recognize and deal with signs of stress or burnout. This not only helps individual families, but also assists the department by keeping the volunteers content. It is recommended that departments have an employee assistance program (EAP) class for families, spouses, and significant others.

A NEW TAKE ON FIRE DEPARTMENT AUXILIARIES

For years, volunteer fire departments across the country have sponsored ladies' auxiliaries as a way of including firefighters' wives in the department. Auxiliaries have taken on many support functions such as operating canteens, raising funds, cooking for meetings and dinners, and other support services. The ladies have taken pride in working in their communities and helping their husbands. Husbands have taken pride in having the whole family involved in the department. The cohesiveness of having the wives in the auxiliary has helped departments to be more family-oriented.

Today, with many females serving as firefighters, some departments have changed the name of the ladies' auxiliary to simply the "auxiliary." This is more inclusive, and allows the husbands of female firefighters to join. Spouses of firefighters should be encouraged to join the department and perform support functions such as fire prevention talks.

INVOLVING THE FAMILY IN DEPARTMENT SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Regardless of whether family members are part of a department or auxiliary, every department should hold social events that involve families. Again, if family members feel included in the department, they are usually more supportive of it and more willing to adjust family schedules around the time demands of the member of the fire department.

Family recognition of the support they provide is extremely important. Many organizations hold banquets not only to recognize members, but their wives and significant others. Some departments encourage members to bring their children to the station if they are doing station maintenance, washing apparatus, or even running calls. Recreational equipment and weights can be purchased for family members to use under proper supervision while they are there if liability insurance is provided. Cards or flowers can be sent to members' spouses to thank them for their support of the department.

Ways to Involve Family Members Socially in the Fire Department

- Invite family members to social functions (ice cream nights, movie nights, miniature golf nights, picnics, barbecues, sporting events).
- Purchase tickets by the department for family nights at a local theater or sporting event.
- Hold family dinners at the firehouse.
- Allow members to bring children to the station, and even set aside playrooms for children.
- Sponsor fire department youth sport teams.

- Invite family members to annual department banquets and recognize them.
- Present awards to family members who have been particularly supportive of the department.
- Send birthday cards and/or gifts to family members.
- Highlight a firefighter and his/her family in the department newsletter (and include a picture of the family) or in the local newspaper.
- Purchase a big screen television for the station and provide food for families to watch sporting events or movies.
- Install weight rooms and basketball goals or nets (tennis, badminton, soccer, hockey) that fire department members and their families can use at the station.

SELECTIVE PAGING

Another way to reduce time demands is to limit who gets pages for emergency calls and when they get paged. Individual groups of volunteers can be assigned a special capability in their pagers that can only be alerted when a specific tone is broadcast to activate that capability. This enables a department to call only members of a specific station, only EMS members, only fire members, members of a specific duty crew, or whatever group is desired. Under this system, instead of paging all of the members and having everyone show up, only those who are really needed are paged.

Some departments have a similar alerting system in which one alert tone means “come if you can,” and the second tone means “there is a working incident; all available personnel needed.” Sometimes a three tone system is used, with special signals to denote a) respond if you can; b) respond, this is your first due assignment; and c) all hands respond - this is a major incident.

HANDLING THE MOST DEMANDING HOURS: THE WEEKDAY HOURS

Weekdays are generally the most demanding periods for volunteers (especially purely volunteer departments) because most members are at work. Balancing work and emergency responses is no easy task. Due to the time demands of employment, volunteers are usually less available during the daytime hours. Departments that demand that members respond during the day may be viewed as too demanding.

To compound the problem, volunteer departments across the country report that many employers are less willing today to allow volunteers to leave mid-day for emergency calls. This is due, in part, to the trend of replacing small, locally owned businesses with larger chain/corporation stores that have less of an interest in civic functions. Many volunteers worry about retaining their jobs if they have to drop everything and respond to emergencies. Working with employers and through Selective Paging it may be possible to arrange for volunteers to leave their work for working incidents or on Second Alarms. The major question is whether and by whom the employee will be compensated during his/her time away from the job.

One way to address the weekday staffing problem is to recruit members who work at night but are available during the day. These members may also be able to assist with fire prevention, fire and safety education programs at schools, preventive maintenance, and with routine administrative tasks during the daytime. In respect of their time and because they often cannot train when other members typically train, some departments have scheduled daytime drills or send night

works to regional fire schools for their training. Others hold weekend sessions to cover all aspects of firefighting and rescue operations. Additional ways to address the weekday problem is to court employers of volunteers by:

- **Having a representative of the fire department visit the employer to explain the significant of being a volunteer firefighter.**
- **Giving recognition to employers who allow time off** by presenting them plaques of appreciation, inviting them to fire department functions, or mentioning them in newsletters and news releases, or recognizing them on the annual report. Other departments send thank-you letters to employers.
- **Pointing out the advantages to the employer of having trained EMTs and firefighters on the premises** to respond to emergencies of the business or its customers.
- **Reducing the time spent by employees on calls during working hours** so they can return to work quickly. Each department should review how it can best accomplish this. Some may be able to dismiss day workers once the fire is out, while others may be able to do it as soon as the unit is ready to respond, but before apparatus cleanup is finalized.
- **Recruiting trained volunteers who live and volunteer in other jurisdictions but work in your department's jurisdiction during the day.**

Some states (e.g. Minnesota and Massachusetts) have statutes that require employers not to penalize volunteer firefighters who leave work for emergency calls if the company has a policy that allows them to respond. This protects volunteers from losing compensation. Pennsylvania has a law that does not allow for a volunteer firefighter to be penalized at work due to tardiness at work from responding to a call.

SUPPLEMENTARY FULL-TIME PERSONNEL

As volunteers quit or are unable to respond in the daytime, more and more communities are forced to hire career firefighters. This may further diminish volunteers' interest and cause more to drop out, or it may lighten the volunteers' workload, thereby increasing their willingness to volunteer. Much depends on how the concept is sold to the department and how both the career and volunteers are managed. The greatest factor influencing the success of a combination department is good leadership that encourages the career and volunteer members to work together as a team recognizing the need for and importance of each other.

When career members are hired, fire departments must establish the roles and responsibilities of career and volunteer members in a clear, written format. These should include responsibilities with station duties and emergency calls. In the long run, written, defined roles will help to avoid conflict over who is supposed to do what.

Some departments that have hired career members have found that volunteers quit because they feel like they are being replaced and no longer have a purpose in the organization. To avoid this feeling, departments can give volunteers their own special role such as technical rescue response; staffing the second engine; staffing a ladder truck (if career personnel staff only an engine); or other fireground support duties.

RECOGNITION

Volunteering in the fire service is one of the most demanding volunteer activities today. It requires time, dedication, special training, certification, and recertification. Additionally, it can pose great individual risk.

Most volunteers want to be appreciated and receive recognition for their service to the community. Some are willing to work quietly for years and obtain satisfaction just from doing the job, helping people in need, and the camaraderie in the department. However, this is seldom the case with the younger generations now in and entering the fire service. But surveys of people who have left volunteering and perceptions of volunteers from across the country indicate that a little recognition goes a long way. Although most volunteers may never mention the desire for recognition, it is almost always a positive when given and usually a negative when withheld. One of the sources of recruitment and retention problems listed previously relates to a feeling among volunteers that they are not adequately appreciated.

In some locales recognition plays a major role in satisfaction and retention. A volunteer must not only feel needed, but also appreciated. Recognition can be as simple as a pat on the back or picture in the local paper. If this is identified as an issue, consider the following ways to recognize volunteers:

- Spotlight the accomplishments of volunteers in department or community newsletters emphasize with photos.
- Send thank you cards to members for service provided, or greeting cards to new members.
- Request that local media feature pictures of volunteers, fire department events, training, or actual incidents.
- Issue press releases to the media to spotlight the accomplishments of volunteers with their picture.
- Seek special national, state awards, special local, or departmental awards.
- Hold awards banquets.
- Hold graduation ceremonies when new recruits complete initial training.
- Give a simple pat on the back or kudos; this can include shirts, caps, and jackets.
- Create trading cards with members in uniform or turnouts and specifics on each individual.
- Hold an annual volunteer fire department appreciation week.
- Hang a banner on the station to remind the public to thank their volunteer firefighters and EMS providers.
- Request that local political bodies issue proclamations to recognize volunteers.

NEWSLETTERS

A department newsletter is an excellent way of not only communicating with members of the department, but also giving firefighters recognition from their peers for a job well done. Many departments encourage the local or community paper to publish articles on volunteers who have won awards or have long service records. Newsletters can be distributed to the public as well to enhance the emergency service image, provide timely messages, and encourage recruitment. A good outlet for these is public service clubs in the community.

THANK YOU NOTES AND GREETING CARDS

Departments can also show appreciation for their firefighters by expressing an interest in their lives outside the station. Some chiefs make it a practice to send thank you notes, birthday cards, and anniversary cards. With the widespread use of computers, date lists can easily be accomplished with notifications of when to send the cards.

PICTURES

One especially important form of recognition is publishing pictures of volunteers in local newspapers or in other media. These pictures can be of fireground operations or other events, recognition of reaching a major service milestone (5, 10, 15, 20 years), or a group or team portrait. This is an image-oriented society, and pictures are valued more than names in print. Neighbors and friends who see your picture are likely to comment about it. Most firefighters (indeed, most people) enjoy that kind of recognition and like seeing their picture in the local paper. Digital cameras make this easy and low cost.

One department takes an annual group portrait, makes a calendar, and distributes the calendars to all the local business. It found this to be surprisingly useful for both retention and recruitment. People visiting the cleaners or food stores see the volunteers' pictures. Some people who saw the pictures of the group (or the individual firefighter of the month) wanted to join with the notion that their picture would be on that wall in the future.

PRESS RELEASES

Additional recognition can be given by submitting press releases to the media for years of service recognition or for some special achievement. Press releases should be accompanied by a picture. Weekly newspapers can feature a firefighter of the week. Recruiting a journalist to serve as the Public Relations/Public Information Officer can have a positive effect for the department. This individual may have photographer skills as well.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER AWARDS

The National Volunteer Fire Council presents two national awards each year: the NVFC Lifetime Achievement Award and the NVFC Fire Prevention Award. To nominate a volunteer, call 1-888-ASK NVFC. Also, *Fire Chief Magazine* presents an award to the Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year.

STATE RECOGNITION

Some states have special awards open to volunteer firefighters. New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, for example, select a "Volunteer Firefighter of the Year." Other states offer a "Fire Chief of the Year" award and the "Best Team (unit) of the Year." There is keen competition for these awards. The nominations themselves are considered an honor and should be publicized.

LOCAL COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AND HEROISM AWARDS

While virtually every fire department gives out its own awards, few awards actually come from the community being served. Recognition by one's peers is highly sought, but recognition from the city or town is perceived as even more special. Firefighters not only do necessary duties but heroic deeds that should be recognized. To honor these actions, many governmental agencies offer a Medal of Valor or a Heroism Medal. In some communities, civic groups host a dinner honoring their firefighters. Others agencies give an award to the fire department with the highest number of training hours per firefighter in their area. In south central Pennsylvania, a local bank hosts a dinner and makes a donation to the fire departments in which it has a branch bank. In King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, the local Rotary Club selects a Firefighter of the Year, providing a cash award and plaque; the local elected officials annually recognize a Firefighter of the Year with a plaque; and the Chamber of Commerce selects a Public Service Person of the Year that has included volunteer fire officers.

AWARD BANQUETS

Fire departments across the nation give recognition to their volunteers in the form of plaques, certificates, and length of service awards. Unfortunately, some award banquets have become meaningless because virtually everyone receives an award; and the recognition becomes devalued. It is important to remember that for recognition to work, it must be earned. Giving almost everyone in the department an award reduces the importance of all the awards.

The series of service awards should be graduated, so that there is motivation to stay another five years for the next one. People are proud of visible items of recognition they can display on a shelf or hang on the wall. Having a series of even more impressive awards helps one justify staying, even though the monetary value of those awards is very small relative to the amount of time donated. Awards are extremely important psychologically for the volunteer.

Awards should be presented at ceremonies, with local officials and the press attending; these make good photo opportunities. Longer service awards, or those with special significance should be accompanied with more ceremony. Whenever possible, family members should be acknowledged in award ceremonies and appreciation expressed for their own contributions, understanding, and sacrifices in allowing the members to participate. This is much more than lip service; it is crucial to having a successful volunteer family.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

The best way to recognize new recruits who have just completed training is to hold a graduation ceremony to which governing officials, the media, and general public are invited. Fire departments utilize these to create the image that volunteers are a select group of individuals with a high level of training. Each volunteer is given a framed certificate that can be proudly displayed at home.

PATS ON THE BACK

The least expensive, but often the most important thing that a chief and officers can do to show appreciation is to give an occasional pat on the back. When someone hears that they did a good job, especially from the chief, it can be very motivating. Encouragement can often have a great effect on a volunteer firefighter's effort. Positive feedback is a great motivator. Let firefighters know when they have done a good job as well as when improvements need to be made. This will also reflect in the level of retention within the department.

INCENTIVES

Incentive programs are used throughout the volunteer fire service as a retention tool. They are necessary to help recruit and retain volunteers. Localities benefit financially from having experienced volunteers who are willing to stay active for years. Due to the demanding and risky nature of firefighting, many departments find that members consider leaving the service after only five to 10 years. Long term (10-20 years) retention of members is important to ensure that there is a solid base of experienced members.

SETTING UP AN INCENTIVE SYSTEM

There are many ways to set up an incentive system in a fire department. The most successful incentive programs today are diverse and appeal to volunteers of all ages, experience, and ranks. Any of the incentives listed previously could be offered, but fire departments should not limit themselves to one type of incentive program for all volunteers because one program may not appeal to all members. Instead, they should offer a menu of several different programs from which volunteers could select to receive.

The incentive system must be equitable. In other words, each item on the menu should provide similar benefits so that volunteers who choose different items receive similar benefits. Volunteers should be allowed to choose the incentive (or combination of incentives) they want to receive on an annual basis.

Civic leaders are sometimes hesitant to provide financial incentives to volunteers. However, the benefits of retaining members by providing small financial incentives far outweigh the costs of excessive turnover or hiring full-time firefighters. **The sampling survey performed for this report indicated that direct monetary incentives were the top three reasons that volunteers keep serving.**

Some of the incentives used across the nation to recruit and retain volunteers are:

- **Thank you** (the department, and you individually did a good job; the community really appreciates the commitment, time, and work you do. As mentioned in the previous section, volunteers need recognition. This will go a long way in helping to retain membership.)
- **Direct monetary incentives** (pay-per-call, length of service awards programs, tax breaks, tuition reductions, personal health insurance, life insurance)
- **Indirect monetary incentives** (passes to beaches, amusement parks, resorts, golf courses, gyms, libraries; parking permits; food provided to those on standby duty at a station or at training; trips to fire-related training conferences or even personal pleasure; free medical examinations)

- **Vehicles** (take home fire department vehicles that can be utilized for personal business)
- **Length of service pins or similar recognition** (denoting number of years of service)

Certain incentives are more appealing to individual volunteers - such as older volunteers - than others. Since membership in the volunteer fire service has become more diverse, fire departments must strive to find the right types of recognition and incentives that appeal to all or a majority of the members. However, it must be remembered that these incentives can vary extensively for the different age groups within the department.

DIRECT FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

While monetary benefits are becoming a higher priority in what attracts personnel to the volunteer fire department, this should not be the primary purpose for joining. The time demands are very high making the hourly return very low. Those who join strictly for the material benefits will soon become disheartened and leave. They need to be mentored and learn the concept that the real goal of volunteering is the desire to help others who are in need.

The 2005 sampling of volunteer departments revealed that of the 25 factors that assisted retention, all but 4 had a fiscal overtone. The major items included:

- State or local tax credits
- Length of service awards (quasi retirement programs)
- Tuition/credit reductions
- Access to group health insurance programs
- Cash for responses
- Group rates for auto and home insurance
- Access to group dental insurance programs

The number of volunteer departments that provide some form of a direct monetary incentive is increasing. Monetary incentives are program that pay volunteers per hour or call and for training sessions, to defray expenses, or give pensions. One example was: \$9.00 for training sessions; \$7.00 for emergency responses; reimbursement for college textbooks up to \$500.00 per year; department shirt, hat, and shoes; and a \$600.00 per month retirement after 20 years.

Financial awards, besides their obvious reward, have the psychological aspect of helping volunteers rationalize to themselves and their families that they are getting some tangible benefit from the extra hours. However, the concept of paying volunteers per call or a lump sum per year is controversial, and use of direct financial rewards varies greatly from state to state and region to region. Also, the fire department must assure that financial incentives do not violate FLSA or IRS Regulations.

Types of Direct Financial Incentives

- Retirement/pension or length of service award programs (LOSAP)
- Individual retirement accounts
- Pay per call or per hour, or though “monthly pots”
- Annual reimbursements
- Tax exemptions and tax deductions
- Health insurance (for volunteers and their families) including dental and vision

- Tuition assistance
- Housing assistance
- Low-interest housing loans
- In-season bonuses
- Scholarships
- Emergency funds (loans)
- Death benefits

In many states volunteers are paid per call. In Massachusetts the volunteers have traditionally been known as “call men.” Some volunteers argue that direct cash payments detract from the primary notion of volunteerism - namely to help their community and those in need for no compensation. At the same time, others argue that small stipends or pay per call are necessary given the demands on volunteer firefighters today. These funds can help pay the rising costs of being a volunteer such as paying for having clothes cleaned and fuel for personal vehicles. They contend that the small sums helps retain members in an age in which training standards and call load have increased time demands. The minimal sums are a much smaller price than having to hire a full-time career force.

Most seem to agree that direct monetary incentives can help with retention, but they are not the best method to retain members. Departments that use direct monetary incentives often find themselves having to deal with squabbles by members over money, demands for increases in payouts, or feelings of inequity among members who are paid or reimbursed at different rates. Members are most likely to stay in the department because they enjoy the service they are providing, they are recognized for their contributions to public safety, and because time demands are manageable and not excessive.

Examples of financial incentives that have been used to retain volunteers are discussed below.

Retirement Plans, Pension Plans, and Length of Service Award Programs (LOSAP)

Among the most important, widely used, and growing incentives for volunteers are retirement plans. As businesses and the government reduce employee pension plans, volunteer department plans will appear even more attractive. They are referred to by various names other than pensions. In some places they are called “Length of Service Awards Programs” (LOSAP), in others “Awards” programs, “Relief Fund,” or pensions.

These volunteer pension plans usually are carefully structured to avoid unnecessary entanglement with state and federal tax codes. Internal Revenue Code 457 (<http://www.irs.gov/retirement/article/0,,id=111442,00.html>) specifically excludes LOSAP from being a Deferred Compensation plan provided two criteria are met: it must be for bona fide volunteers, and the annual contribution for any person in the plan cannot exceed \$3000. In a few states, there are statewide plans. The statewide plans may either be inclusive or exclusive. New Jersey, Wisconsin and Georgia have exclusive statewide plans. No private LOSAP vendor may market their plan in those states. Other states, such as North Carolina, Virginia and Texas, have statewide plans that allow for private vendors’ plans in place of the statewide plan.

A LOSAP can be structured as a Defined Benefit (DB) or a Defined Contribution (DC) plan. With a DB plan, LOSAP provides lifetime monthly income payments once a volunteer reaches a certain entitlement age, usually between 55 and 65. The size of the “pension” usually is a function of the number of years a member volunteers. Depending upon the funding available, pensions can range from \$100 to \$1200 a month after 40 years of service. This certainly does not pay for the hours given by a volunteer for their community. In other cases, such as with a

DC plan, LOSAP provides a lump sum award at entitlement age based upon years of service, amounts contributed each year, and earnings on those contributions. Under most systems, the municipality contributes an annual amount to a central fund for each qualifying volunteer.

The major problem that many departments encounter is where the communities or departments obtain the money to contribute to these plans. This problem is reduced in states where funding is provided, such as New York state, but in the majority of the states legislative assistance is not provided. Tax supported fire districts can budget for this expense with greater ease. The independent, chartered fire departments prevalent in many areas have difficulty raising the funds for this added program. In some cases, individuals contribute to the retirement program, but in most cases, the community or department pays for the whole program.

To maintain status in the program, most communities require a volunteer to earn a minimum number of points from training and responses. This point system requires each volunteer to answer a certain number of calls, attend meetings, training, and so forth.

The amount of money dispersed depends on the degree to which a volunteer is vested in the program, which is determined by years of service (e.g. 50% at 10 years; 75% at 15 years; 100% at 20 years). North Carolina's statewide retirement program, which is funded by the state from foreign insurance premium tax, provides \$162 per month to volunteers after 20 years of service. Volunteers in Volusia County, Florida, receive \$200 per month after 20 years of service and age 55. These financial incentives and modest pensions can be great bargains for the community relative to having to pay fully for fire protection.

Many departments initiate LOSAP programs to retain volunteers and reduce the cost to the department caused by high turnover, especially among members with over five years of experience. Personnel turnover affects departments in two major ways: they lose experienced members, and they must pay for the training and equipment of new members who replace the ones who have left.

The success of pension programs varies. Many feel LOSAP program are not very effective for recruiting/retaining younger members (18-30 age range) who are not as concerned about retirement but are more effective for retaining older members. Younger members are usually not concerned about retirement; and therefore, not very interested in LOSAP. National research indicates that young or new recruits are usually more interested in a more tangible and direct incentive program (e.g. vehicle personal property tax exemption). LOSAP also may not appeal to new members because the benefits will not be realized for many years and the members may move after a few years or be transferred by their employer. To make recruitment easier, perhaps the program could move with the individual or he/she could pay into it personally after moving.

A LOSAP program or variation of it is subject to state and federal tax rules. Departments should seek help of accountants and attorneys in setting up a LOSAP program. For those who wish to research LOSAP programs, the following sites will be beneficial:

New York	www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/muni/perf/01ps2bod.htm#service
Iowa	www.legis.ia.us/GA/79GA/Interim/2002/comminfo/firefight/final.htm
New Jersey	www.state.nj.us/dca/lgs/losap/losap.shtml

Individual Retirements Accounts

Another way for fire departments to provide retirement benefits is direct deposits into members' individual retirement accounts (IRAs). This variation of LOSAP does not require a department to create a special LOSAP fund. However, since the department makes contributions into individual's accounts, it loses control over the allocated funds. Under this program, a depart-

ment gives each qualifying volunteer a monetary award that would be transferred directly into an individual retirement account. The amount awarded could increase for each additional year of service.

The NVFC maintains a listing of retirement programs by state at the site: www.nvfc.org/benefits/state-by-state.php?Type=Retirement

Pay Per Call or Per Hour

Some volunteer fire departments pay an hourly stipend for responding to calls and training. Stipends are paid either per call or per hour. Although it is generally not as much pay as working overtime or taking a second job, it does help defray the expenses of volunteering.

Volunteer stipends vary considerably among departments and across regions. In some areas, volunteer firefighter incentive pay is based on levels of certification and rank. Pay may be tied to the number of calls, number of hours spent on calls and training, or earning a number of points for various activities.

Some departments hold back the money earned until just before Christmas or Mother's Day, and pay in lump sums to make the modest pay seem larger, and to encourage spending it on the family. An extra \$500 at Christmas usually has a greater psychological effect than \$10 per week.

"Monthly Pot"

Some departments budget a fixed amount for volunteer firefighters each year. They then divide the annual allotment into equal monthly pots. Each fixed monthly pot is then divided among the firefighters in proportion to how many hours they worked and trained each month. In a busy month with many calls and hours served, a \$1,000 pot may be split so that firefighters receive \$5 per hour served. If the next month is slower, the same \$1,000 pot may translate into \$15 per hour. A side advantage of a fixed monthly stipend is that an increase in fires is not linked to an increase in pay. If prevention is successful, volunteers are rewarded by receiving the same pay while having to respond to fewer calls.

Annual Reimbursement

Some departments give an annual lump sum payment (generally in the range of \$500 - \$2,000) to volunteers. The money is given to offset the general expenses of responding to calls such as fuel, vehicle wear and tear, and damage to personal clothing. Higher amounts generally are given to chiefs or line officers who have additional responsibilities that cause them to incur more personal expenses than a line firefighter.

Tax Exemptions and Deductions

An increasing number of departments use personal property tax exemptions and deductions as an incentive for volunteer firefighters. Qualifying volunteers are exempt from paying personal property tax on one or more vehicles, a house, or other item of personal property. In Virginia, counties can choose to allow volunteers to exempt one vehicle from personal property taxes, which usually represents a \$400 to \$1,000 savings on a new car. A tax incentive is realized annually and is considered an excellent incentive for volunteers of all ages, but particularly for younger volunteers who are not as interested in LOSAP-type awards as their older counterparts. It may not be a great incentive to those who pay little personal property taxes because they have an old car or own very little personal property.

The state of Maryland has the Maryland Tax Incentive for Active Volunteer Fire and EMS. This allows members with 3 years of service to take an additional blanket subtraction of \$3,500 after all other calculations from their taxable income. State taxes are then paid on the remaining balance. This proves to be a very valuable incentive since it is applied on an annual basis.

On June 6, 2015 Oneida County, New York, Executive Joe Griffo signed into law a property tax credit for volunteer fire and EMS respondents in the county. The tax credit would amount to 10 percent of a house's assessed value up to \$3,000, multiplied by the latest equalization rate for that community. The exemption will reduce the county tax bill between \$20 and \$30 for an average firefighter's home. However, this exemption could be approved by villages, towns, and school districts to multiply the benefit to the county's roughly 2,400 volunteer firefighters who belong to 48 fire departments. The exemption would be granted to firefighters who have been enrolled in their departments for at least five years, own their primary residence, reside in Oneida County, have no other exemptions, and own single family residences. Overall, the exemption is estimated to save the county's volunteer firefighters about \$60,000.

Health Insurance

A small number of departments across the country offer volunteers health insurance as an incentive to maintain their membership. This benefit is particularly appealing to students, the self-employed, or anyone who pays a substantial amount of money out of pocket for insurance. Some departments have provisions to pay for health insurance for family members if the volunteer contributes higher levels of service. A retention incentive is to pay one-half of the cost of insuring the family members of volunteers.

Under such a system, a department or local government purchases the health insurance directly from a health care provider, or adds the volunteers onto the local government's policy. A department may establish a limit to which it will contribute toward the policy, and require that volunteers pay additional costs.

Tuition Assistance

Another incentive program is to provide tuition for volunteers who want to enroll in college or technical school classes. In some cases volunteers must agree to be an active member for a specified time period such as two years after receiving degrees or they have to pay back the tuition. This has been a very popular recruitment and retention tool. Some departments limit the tuition assistance to only classes or degrees related to firefighting and emergency management. It is recommended, however, not to establish such restrictions to avoid excluding a volunteer enrolled in a non-fire degree program from being able to benefit from this incentive program.

North Carolina provides one four-year scholarship and one two-year scholarship per region for volunteers in the state. Some states provide tuition free scholarships for volunteers to state schools. These types of incentives encourage volunteers to stay in the department and to keep up with the current standards and requirements. The end result is a more professional and effective organization.

Howard County, Maryland, Fire and Rescues Services has initiated a career ladder program to acquire firefighter/paramedics called the Paramedic Pathway Program. Students from five high schools work with the firefighter training academy and the Howard County Community College. Students are recruited in their junior year and become state-certified EMTs by the end of the year. They complete basic firefighting by the end of their senior year. They then matriculate to the Community College where they become nationally registered paramedics after two years. The department pays the costs of the training while the students are in high school and then guides them to financial aid and grant sources for the college level expenses.

Housing Assistance

The cost of housing has become so expensive in some areas that volunteers are not able to afford to live in their communities. Housing prices in affluent communities often push younger volunteers out of a department because they cannot afford to purchase (or even rent) a house.

Many departments have begun programs to allow volunteers to live in the station for free.

- One department offers a residency program for its volunteers. Six volunteers are allowed to live at the station on the condition that they give 120 hours of standby time per month. Volunteers who participate in this program avoid having to pay rent to live in town.
- Another department has placed trailer homes next to several of its stations where members and their families can live. When the bells go off, however, these members are expected to run calls. This program has helped ensure that a truck will get out of the door quickly. It has also helped to retain members who otherwise would move elsewhere because they cannot afford housing in the department's response area.
- A department serving an upscale ski resort community built two apartment units onto its station. Several volunteers and their families live there.

Other departments have gone as far as to purchase houses near the fire station where volunteers and their families live for free, hoping that volunteers will stay around at least until they are able to save enough money to afford a house. In exchange, the volunteers must be available a certain number of days or hours per week to run emergency calls.

Special Low-Interest Housing Loans

In Pennsylvania, some fire companies use money obtained under the Pennsylvania Firemen's Relief Association Act, which is funded by a Foreign Insurance Tax, to provide low-interest mortgage loans to members. Reasonable rates are provided to active members. Some criteria may apply such as the borrower may have to secure a bank loan and pay on it for one year before being eligible to secure a low-interest loan from the Relief Association funds. One bank offers mortgages as long as the money is available and with the following regulations:

Mortgage only 80% of the cost,

The firefighter must purchase a house in the community, and

The interest rate is 2% below prime, but not less than a set figure.

In-Season Bonus

A city or town that is high in tourism will see an increase in calls during certain seasons. Since volunteers like to vacation too, it is important to ensure that community emergencies are covered during these periods. One method is to award an in-season bonus for weekends above the usual pay to any officer or firefighter who agrees to respond to all calls during prime vacation and recreation seasons.

INDIRECT MONETARY INCENTIVES

Indirect monetary incentives are financial rewards or benefits that save volunteers money but do not provide direct cash payouts, reimbursements, or tax reductions. These incentives are highly valued by volunteers, especially for those who are against incentive systems that provide direct payouts. Examples of indirect monetary incentives include:

- Local business discounts
- Gift certificates
- Health club memberships
- Scholarships
- Trips (to fire department training expos or for personal pleasure)
- Free cable television
- Exemption from local utility bills

- Free food while on duty or at training
- Holding a drawing for a restaurant gift certificate for those who attend a meeting or drill
- Foreign exchange programs

Local Business Discounts

In many towns, local restaurants, movie theaters, and other business offer discounts to volunteer firefighters and EMTs. In Colorado, a major incentive offered by a number of departments is skiing at local resorts at no cost. A volunteer may be given two passes good for a year of skiing, plus several nights at a local resort. Other departments provide discounted summer activities such as golf, or the free use of exercise equipment at local resorts.

In one area a local department store gives firefighters a 25 percent discount for two shopping days during Christmas. Department leaders can take the initiative to find such discounts by writing to stores and resorts to discuss possible volunteer incentives.

Chamber of Commerce Dollars and Gift Certificates

A unique incentive program awards volunteers with “Chamber Dollars” for participation in fire department activities. The Chamber Dollars are gift certificates issued by the local chamber of commerce that are redeemable at local businesses. The dollars are given for participating in department activities, responding to a certain percentage of calls, and attending training. The dollars are also used as an incentive to attend meetings.

The department holds a drawing for Chamber Dollars at every meeting (members must be present to win), and also picks a firefighter of the month to receive dollars. In addition, every volunteer is given dollars quarterly based on the amount of participation in activities. A typical volunteer receives about \$200-\$300 Chamber Dollars per year.

Unfortunately, this program is not a “freebie” for the department. It buys approximately \$5,000 worth of Chamber Dollars from the chamber of commerce each year. The department has found, however, that giving out Chamber Dollars is a better incentive than giving out cash. It is also a method of giving the volunteers monetary rewards without having to worry about Internal Revenue Service withholdings. Even if your town’s local chamber of commerce does not sell these types of gift certificates, your department could purchase gift certificates from local businesses

Health Club Memberships

A department can buy memberships from a local health club for its members. This can serve as a recruitment and retention incentive especially with younger people, and also encourages the members to stay in shape in a time when heart attacks are a major killer of firefighters.

Other Indirect Monetary Incentives

Some other ideas for indirect monetary incentives are the following:

- **All-expense-paid trips to state fire conferences, fire expos, or seminars.** Rent tour buses to take volunteers to conferences across the state or region.
- **Free cable television at home.**
- **Exemption from local utility bills.** Exempt volunteers from having to pay their monthly water or other municipal utility bills.
- **Free food and meals while on duty or at training.** Many departments provide free food to their volunteer working on duty shifts. The cost of this incentive program is small compared to the benefits it has toward retaining volunteers.

- **Gift certificates for attendance at meetings or training.** Some departments hold drawings at meetings for a gift certificate from a local restaurant or fire equipment catalog. Only members in attendance are eligible to win.
- **Monthly performance award.** This system awards a gift certificate to a member who earns the most points in a month (see section on qualifying for benefits and incentives for information on point systems).
- **Foreign exchange.** Establishing relations with one or more sister departments in other nations can be highly enjoyable and enlightening. Members who visit their sister department can often stay and eat for free at the fire station. As an incentive, the department may give away one or two foreign exchange trips a year. However, departments need to be careful about possible negative publicity from foreign travel, especially if public funds are used. This or any incentive program should be portrayed as a small reward in light of the bargain provided by volunteers.

UNIFORM AND DEPARTMENT PARAPHERNALIA

Many departments tie the distribution of uniform items to either length of service or training/certification levels, or both. New members may receive department T-shirts upon completion of recruit class, then have to wait one year until they receive jackets. Upon meeting certain requirements to becoming a Firefighter II, the volunteer might receive a dress uniform.

Some departments give their members something different with the department logo on it each year: a wallet, T-shirt, jacket, hat, thermos bottle, etc. Department paraphernalia provides members with a proud identity. The department logo represents a team or unit in which they are an integral part.

OTHER INCENTIVES

There are many incentives that have little or no cost, but can be highly motivational nonetheless. These go a long way because they acknowledge dedication and hard work while allowing all members an equal opportunity to achieve them.

- Select a member of the year or month, for both operational and administrative positions.
- Ask local merchants for discounts or gift certificates for volunteers at local businesses.
- Recognize volunteers who complete training courses with certificates, plaques, or by featuring them in the local newspaper.
- Award outstanding volunteers with subscriptions to fire or EMS magazines.
- Cover the reasonable expenses associated with sending a volunteer to a special out-of-town training class.
- Award outstanding members with all-expense paid trips to state Firefighter Association meetings or training conferences.
- Award a top responder with a family get-away trip to a local hotel or resort.
- Excuse members who have given certain numbers of years of service occasionally from work details or mandatory duty nights.
- Excuse the “member of the month” from housework.
- Exempt volunteers from local utility bills (water, trash, etc.).
- Issue officers fire department vehicles that they can take home.

- Give the top responder of the department a reserved parking spot.
- Give flowers to a spouse on special occasions.
- Permit members to use the station washer & dryer for personal use.
- Provide an area and tools for car maintenance at the station.
- Provide free videos, cable television, and movie channels at the station.
- Create departmental trading cards with pictures of the volunteers (good for the kids).
- Provide physical fitness facilities at the station.
- Provide free meals to members on duty or at training.
- Give volunteers passes to local sporting events (local sporting teams often will donate to the department to give away).

TABLE 3.
Sample Award Tiers

Incentive Program	Basic-Level Award	Mid-Level Award	High-Level Award
Qualifying members are eligible to pick to receive the benefits from one of the incentive programs listed below each year.			
LOSAP (departmental group plan)	Awarded at age 60: 10 years service: \$150/month; 15 years of service: \$200/month; 20 years of service: \$250/month	\$5 extra per month to each basic level award for each year that mid-level criteria was met	\$10 extra per month to each basic level award for each year that high-level criteria was met
LOSAP VARIATION (IRA or 401K for each volunteer)	\$1,500 contributed by town per year	\$2,000 contributed by town per year	\$2,500 contributed by town per year
PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION	Tax credit of \$1,500 per year toward local taxes (e.g., personal property including cars, house, etc.)	Tax credit of \$2,000 per year	Tax credit of \$2,500 per year
HEALTH INSURANCE (allowing volunteers to join town policy)	Contribute \$1,500 per year toward health insurance (additional contributed by volunteer)	Contribute up to \$2,000 per year (other family members can fall under this insurance if the costs for the individual volunteer's insurance do not reach \$2,000)	Contribute up to \$2,500 per year (other family members can fall under this insurance if the costs for the individual volunteer's insurance do not reach \$2,500)
TUITION ASSISTANCE	Contribute \$1,500 per year toward tuition assistance	Contribute \$2,000 per year toward tuition assistance	Contribute \$2,500 per year toward tuition assistance
HOUSING ASSISTANCE (town provides direct monetary assistance toward renting or purchasing housing)	Contribute \$1,500 per year toward housing assistance	Contribute \$2,000 per year toward housing assistance	Contribute \$2,500 per year toward housing assistance
HOUSING ASSISTANCE (town buys group house for volunteers to live in)	Volunteer gets room in house rent-free for 6 months in a one year period	Volunteer gets room in house rent-free for 9 months in a one year period	Volunteer gets room in house rent-free for 12 months in a one year period

EQUALITY IN INCENTIVE SYSTEMS

As previously stated, the incentive system must be equitable so that a volunteer who chooses one program receives similar benefits to a volunteer who chooses a separate one. Volunteers who meet the basic qualification level should receive similar basic rewards. Volunteers who exceed the basic level should qualify for higher rewards. There are various ways this can be arranged; an example is described in *Table 3*.

QUALIFYING FOR BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES

Fire departments must establish a base level of performance that a volunteer must meet to qualify for a particular level of awards. Many departments measure this by creating a point system for participating in activities. Volunteers accrue points by running calls, attending training, attending meetings, and providing administrative or support service. Members who attain a sufficient number of points in a year qualify for either a basic, mid, or high-level of awards. They are then eligible to receive the incentive benefits they choose.

The awards should be given only to members who meet all of the departmental requirements, in addition to meeting point requirements. In other words, members should be required to maintain a certain level of training, attend a certain number of meetings, perform a certain amount of administrative work, or a certain amount of prevention duties to remain qualified for incentives. The incentive system can be structured so that all members are eligible to receive benefits (active firefighters and EMTs, administrative members, public educators), or that only certain members receive them (firefighters, or only those participating on duty crews).

A sample system for accruing points is described in *Table 4*. The system allows members, both operational and administrative, to earn points through a wide range of activities. Certain categories have restrictions about the number of points that can be earned. Others have no maximums so that volunteers are encouraged to spend more time in these activities. It is recommended that the points for the Public Education and Administrative Duties categories be increased to encourage participation. Volunteers who earn points above the minimum requirements for a basic-level award can qualify for higher-level awards see *Table 5*. A department may require volunteers to earn a certain minimum number of points in an area to qualify for any award (e.g., a volunteer must accrue at least 4 points in meetings, 8 points in training, 1 point in public education).

TABLE 4.
Sample Point System

Activity	Point Accrual*	Minimum Yearly Point Which Must be Earned in this Category	Maximum Yearly Points in this Category
IN-STATION STANDBY TIME	5 points per 4 hours (minimum 4 hours required to earn points)	15 (does not apply to admin. members)	None
SLEEP-INS AT STATION	1.5 points (minimum 10 hours sleep-in period)	None	None
TRAINING	Station drills 1 point Classes 5-10 hours 2 points Classes 11-20 hours 3 points Classes 21-30 hours 4 points Classes 31-40 hours 5 points Classes 41-50 hours 6 points Classes over 50 hours 10 points	8 (does not apply to admin. members)	25 points
MEETINGS	.5 points per official departmental meeting	4	10 points
PUBLIC EDUCATION	.25 points per hour of public education	1	20 points (no maximum for members who only participate as administrative public education)
ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES	.25 points per hour of administrative duties	2	15 points (no maximum for members who only participate as administrative members)
ELECTED POSITION	20 points for completing a one year elected term as an officer or board member	None	20 points
EMERGENCY RESPONSES (from home, not while performing in-station standby time)	.25 points per response 2 points per actual working fire	5 (does not apply to admin. members)	None

* Points can be earned in only one category at any given time (i.e. a member cannot earn points for standby and attending a meeting at the same time.)

TABLE 5.
Sample Award Requirements

BASIC-LEVEL AWARD	50 points per year
MID-LEVEL AWARD	75 points per year
HIGH-LEVEL AWARD	100 points per year

THE FUN FACTOR

The character of the volunteer fire service has progressed from being a social club that provides service to being a service organization that meets professional standards and holds occasional social activities. Nevertheless, the social side of volunteering is one of its attractions. The social or fun aspect is especially significant in rural areas where fire departments are often community social centers. Fire departments are able to provide a focal point as well as service.

One of the keys to retaining volunteers is to make sure they enjoy their service amidst all of the time demands placed on them by training, responses, and other duties. Department management can incorporate entertaining diversions in almost everything they do from training to pizza nights.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE/SOCIAL DIRECTOR

Many departments feel the fun side of volunteering is important enough to appoint a social director or social committees to organize recreational activities. One department titles the position the “fun coordinator.”

PARTIES

Parties and other social events are important activities to maintain positive morale in volunteer organizations. Many departments hold annual formal parties or banquets to recognize members, and as fun occasions. It is important to hold regular or semi-annual parties that members and their families can enjoy. “If volunteering is only about running calls, attending training, and going to meetings, you’ll find that your members will burn out. You need to make sure there are other fun activities which volunteers can attend with their families. This is one way to involve the whole family,”

Fire departments should budget for the social events. One department created a special “fun fund.” Small expenses by the department for fun activities are usually justifiable for recruitment and retention purposes.

PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

Some departments use fire prevention and public fire and safety education activities as a method of making the volunteer experience more fun. Departments that have trouble retaining members because of low call volumes or inactivity may find this to be a good retention technique.

These activities also can be a way of incorporating a spouse of a firefighter into the department. Oftentimes, spouses do not want to run calls but are willing to participate in prevention/education activities. One department developed a regular fire education puppet show for schools and at community events. It produced a videotape of the show and has distributed over 5,000 copies to other departments. The show became so popular that it literally hit the road. Department members travel around the state on a fire prevention bus with puppets painted on the side of it. It has built pride and helped morale and retention.

MAKING TRAINING ENJOYABLE

As noted earlier, training is key to retention. If volunteers view training as boring or a menace, it will hurt retention; however, if it is fun and challenging, it helps retention. Training can be made into an enjoyable activity by going beyond the traditional classroom books and videos. There appear to be two major factors in volunteer training that influence retention. First, the training must include member involvement. The more action orientated, hands on the better. This is best exemplified by Nassau County, New York, where there is not a major recruitment problem, but also a fine training academy that emphasizes live fire training in a series of buildings and situations. Second, the training must be frequent and scheduled in advance. The fewer calls a department has the more vital training becomes to avoid skill degradation and to maintain a safety awareness. Departments that have multiple interesting, involvement oriented training opportunities per month get good attendance (and trained firefighters). There are several ways to do this (refer to Training Requirements section for more information):

- Utilize training scenarios
- Send members on out of town training trips
- Diversify training topics
- Hold training competitions

OTHER WAYS TO HAVE FUN

There are many other activities that fire departments can undertake to ensure their firefighters have fun. Some of these also help the community.

- Provide recreational and exercise equipment at the firehouse. Often recreational equipment is donated or loaned by manufacturers and local stores. One department had a boat and jet skis on loan for water rescue training and recreation.
- Display video tapes or slide shows of members at annual events.
- Host fundraising events (barbecues).
- Host food stands at the local or state fair.
- Build a house and sell it (this is an unusual but fun fundraising event - one department made \$40,000).
- Hold a community haunted house at Halloween (charge admission to raise funds).
- Hold a day with Santa at the firehouse.
- “Dunk the Chief” at the annual picnic or fair.
- Host “Chicken Drop” and “Cow Pie” bingo.
- Hold “Toys for Tots” drives.
- Host community or departmental picnics.
- Hold holiday parties.
- Host an annual picnic.
- Hold a spouse’s supper.
- Host a firefighters breakfast prepared by the officers.
- Take group trips to the theater or sporting events.
- Host departmental sports events and their variations, such as donkey softball or softball in protective clothing.

- Rent a skating rink for an evening.
- Invite lecturers to speak on health concerns, dietary programs, or family interest topics.
- Run a simulated “smoke house” to educate the public on fire safety and prevention.
- Host fire apparatus musters.
- Hold a department function someplace out of the ordinary.
- Instead of always having the department’s Christmas dinner at the firehouse, move it to a site outside the entire protection area where everyone could relax without worrying about the alarm sounding. To maintain fire protection in the home district while away, ask volunteers from neighboring stations to fill in, and then reciprocate.

(Note that some fun activities should be restricted to members and their families, so that there is some exclusivity about who can earn the right to join.)

INCREASED RANGE OF SERVICES

Due to a significant decline in working fires across the nation, some departments are diversifying their services not only to provide better services to the community, but also to prevent complacency in the ranks. When departments run only a dozen calls each year there is a strong probability that members will get bored or the inherent feeling they are not really needed. This is where the frequent, localized, skill-oriented training becomes important.

Some departments have added services such as EMS, technical rescue (confined space, trench, high angle, swift water), hazardous materials, and emergency management services to engage volunteer members. Expanded services increase the number of calls and add to the range of training possibilities. This gives the volunteers a chance to learn new skills while adding to the proficiency of the department. Success of the department can be attributed to the wide range of challenging skills it offers in training and special unit assignments. Expanding services also may be valuable to “slow departments” that run a very small volume of calls each year.

Providing outside aid is also considered somewhat of a diversification. Establishing a mutual aid agreement, response when requested, with other departments can create an opportunity for the firefighters to respond to more calls. However, a more effective system to generate more calls and improve the level of community fire protection is to establish automatic aid. In this way the nearest two or three fire departments automatically respond to reported structural fires. With current radio networks, it is easy to stop unneeded units and return them to their stations. If there is a working fire, immediate additional personnel and equipment is available.

WHAT TO AVOID

A common social activity associated with volunteer fire departments in the past was drinking alcohol. This activity can damage the image of the department as well as offend potential volunteers. Even the suspicion that a member is impaired on the emergency scene can lead to accusations, bad publicity, and even possibly law suits. As the volunteer fire service becomes more diversified, it becomes even more important not to drive out people because of problems encountered during fun occasions when members tend to loosen up, possibly make insensitive remarks, or do foolish things. Departments must also discourage alcohol and forbid drug use that can lead to accidents and jeopardize firefighter safety. The International Association of Fire Chiefs has recently adopted a Zero-Tolerance Policy on alcohol that follows.



Policy Statement

Zero-Tolerance for Alcohol and Drinking in the Fire and Emergency Service

This policy statement is most easily described as a "zero-tolerance" standard about the use of alcohol by members of any fire or emergency service agency/organization at any time when they may be called upon to act or respond as a member of those departments.

Basically, if someone has consumed alcohol within the previous eight (8) hours, or is still noticeably impaired by alcohol consumed prior to the eight (8) hours, he/she must voluntarily remove himself/herself from the activities and functions of the fire or emergency service agency/organization, including all emergency operations and training.

No member of a fire and emergency service agency/organization shall participate in any aspect of the organization and operation of the fire or emergency agency/organization under the influence of alcohol, including but not limited to any fire and emergency operations, fire-police, training, etc.

No alcohol shall be on the premises of any operational portion of the fire department, including but not limited to the apparatus, the apparatus floor, the station living areas, etc.

Fire and emergency service agencies/organizations that raise funds by operating and/or renting social halls must provide a clear and distinct separation of facilities to help insure the zero-tolerance standard of alcohol consumption by their members who may be called upon to perform official duties.

All fire and emergency service agencies/organizations should develop written policies and have procedures in place to support and enforce this policy recommendation. Included in such a policy should be provisions for blood alcohol testing of any individuals involved with any accident that causes measurable damage to apparatus or property or injury/death of agency/organization personnel or civilians.

Sample statements for inclusion in departmental policies for alcohol and drugs follow.

Alcohol Policy

Alcohol consumption is not permitted in or on fire station property except for a specified social function.

It is expected that members will be responsible for their safety and the safety of others when it comes to drinking. Any member that has been drinking within 8 hours must not respond to the station for any call. If a firefighter feels that another firefighter, including line officers, is under the influence of alcohol and may impose a safety threat, it should be brought to the attention of a line officer or senior member. Remember, the department is serving the community and each firefighter's actions are under scrutiny from the community.

Drug Policy

All personnel are absolutely prohibited from unlawfully manufacturing, distributing, possessing or using controlled or illegal substances. It is a condition of membership to refrain from taking illegal drugs on or off the job.

All persons making application for a position will be tested once accepted for membership. A refusal to submit or a positive confirmed test result will be used as a basis to reject the applicant for membership. A member may be required to submit for testing when there is a reasonable suspicion that a member is using or has used drugs in violation of this policy.

There is a suspicion if there is an articulated belief that the member possess or uses drugs or alcohol at the workplace; is observed intoxicated or impaired by drugs or alcohol, has been reported by a reliable and credible source as using drugs; has tampered with a drug test; has caused or contributed to or been involved in an accident while at work, or is engaged in abnormal conduct or erratic behavior while at work, or shows significant deterioration in work performance. The reason to suspect will be based on specific and particular facts and the reasonable inferences drawn from the facts in light of experience.

There is evidence if a member/employee has used, possessed, sold, solicited, or transferred drugs while working.

The use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, especially those that are labeled that driving or machinery operation is affected, can also influence incident scene performance. Personnel using these legal drugs should not respond if performance is impaired in any way.

RECRUITMENT: *Challenges & Solutions*

CITIZEN CORPS

Citizen Corps is a component of USA Freedom Corps for individuals to volunteer to help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies. FEMA has a program called Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to provide training in basic response techniques. Information on this program is available at: www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/cert.

The goal of these groups is to be a well-trained and organized group of volunteers to perform on an ongoing basis to free up firefighters so that they could focus more on the immediate emergency response needs and less on the routine or administrative aspects. This may become a great assistance to volunteer fire departments; however, it also might bleed off potential members.

A partner program to this is the Fire Corps, a consortium of the NVFC, IAFC Volunteer & Combination Officers Section, the IAFF, and the White House's USA Freedom Corps Office. See Appendix D for a complete description. The goal of this program is to support and supplement resource-constrained fire departments by the use of civilian advocates for non-operational activities. For further information visit the website at www.firecorps.org.

Recruitment is the lifeblood of a volunteer fire department. Most departments need to recruit year round. Although some departments do not have trouble finding members, more and more have to expend greater effort than in years past to recruit, and to find the right type of volunteer. Some areas pose particular problems, such as university or resort towns, which have a high turnover population, and places with large retirement populations, which have small pools of able bodies. Even in small-town America, the social environment is changing, and less people are willing or able to volunteer. In all areas, people claim that they are busier than ever and have fewer ties to their community. Thus, recruiting needs to be directed at the needs of the department and directed to a variety of age groups and talents.

Fire departments can overcome these obstacles by looking for the right people in the right places. The traditional way to ensure a steady flow of good recruits was to satisfy existing members and have them recruit by word of mouth. Many departments still prefer that their members search for new members by talking to family and friends, rather than using a formal and comprehensive recruitment system. This still works in some places, but most departments today cannot rely on personal contacts or people just stopping by the station to volunteer. They need to make the public aware of the need for volunteers by projecting that message through their firefighters and the media. Fortunately, the recruitment process can be easily improved by taking a few steps and considering a few issues.

Steps of a Recruitment Program

1. Conduct a needs assessment to determine what types of volunteers are needed
2. Select criteria for whom to recruit and examine qualities and skills to look for in recruits
3. Determine who should do the recruiting and where to look
4. Advertise need for volunteers
5. Hold prospective volunteer informational sessions
6. Screen prospective volunteers
 - Examine motivations of prospective members
 - Interview and test new recruits as appropriate
 - Have new recruits sign a commitment agreement
7. Follow through with prospective members

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Before a department begins its recruitment process, it should take an internal inventory of what kind of people it needs not only to fill the traditional firefighting role, but also the variety of services that volunteer departments offer today. These include emergency medical services, hazardous materials incident mitigation, urban search and rescue, technical rescue, fire prevention inspections and public fire education, and all administrative and support functions. Look at dual recruiting to acquire skilled people for the administration, financial, fundraising, personnel side of the department and those for the active emergency response duties.

Few volunteer departments need a formal survey to determine their recruiting goals. Chiefs of small departments often can keep track of personnel needs in their heads. However, as recruiting becomes more difficult and firefighter standards more strict, departments should consider a more formal way of assessing their personnel needs.

It is critical that a department begins with a needs assessment; what are the needs of the department:

- The levels and types of services offered by the department (current and future)
- How the community is developing and where it is headed
- The financial support available
- What the community wants and expects from the department

How many new members are needed, what types of members are needed (e.g., daytime responders, mechanics, EMTs, public educators, people in certain geographic areas)

A department can hold an officers' meeting each year to assess the need for equipment and staffing for the coming year. Since member response can be call dependent, some departments estimated that they need at least five volunteers to staff each vehicle position. Staffing should also be based on NFPA 1720, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments* and ISO recommendations.

A complete needs assessment should go beyond the number and type of members needed. It must focus on identifying gaps in staffing by time of day, day of week, and geographic area served. An inventory of the types of non-emergency personnel desired should be kept as well as the types of operations personnel. Departments should also examine what age categories it wants to recruit. For example, one department determined that it would target its recruitment efforts at persons over 25 years of age because it had problems with younger members quitting after serving a year or so in the department. Another department went the other way switching its recruiting focus from 25 year olds back to 18-22 year olds.

In addition, more and more fire departments are finding that their communities want departmental membership to reflect the diversity of the area. Therefore, recruitment efforts might also be targeted towards minorities or females.

QUALITIES AND SKILLS TO LOOK FOR IN VOLUNTEERS

Although the need for volunteers is increasing, departments need not necessarily accept every prospective recruit who walks through the door. There are certain character traits that a recruiter should look for to obtain the most useful personnel for the department and the community. The ability to work well with people, intelligence, and an understanding of the firefighter's job are among the key qualities sought.

Most fire departments carefully screen the people who apply to their department. Some go so far as to require background checks that include reviews of driving and criminal records, and references.

CHARACTER QUALITIES

Some of the character qualities to look for in prospective recruits are listed below:

- **Leadership experience.** This is highly desirable and often indicates whether the individual has officer potential.
- **Maturity.** Can this person take constructive criticism? Will he or she be able to accept discipline and commands?
- **Commitment.** A recruiter should inquire about other organizations the person has belonged to, and how long he or she stayed with them. This gives some idea of the likely level of commitment and tenure. People who tend to leave organizations after serving a short time should be questioned about the likelihood of a long-term commitment to the fire service. Turnover is expensive.
- **Team player.** This is important because firefighting involves teamwork.
- **Conscientiousness.** A dedicated, conscientious recruit will be thorough in both operational and administrative duties.
- **Interpersonal skills.** Can this person relate well with others? Is he or she a good communicator?
- **Moral character.** Can this person be trusted in the community's homes and businesses, and around the station?
- **Problem solving nature.** People who can solve problems will help work out solutions and not just complain when a problem arises.
- **Initiative.** This may be a key indicator of how involved and how much of a leader a recruit will be.

EDUCATION

Fire departments should seek highly educated members to assist with operations and management duties. Over the past two decades, the demand for recruits with advanced education has increased for the following reasons. First, fire departments are expected to offer a higher level of service, particularly in EMS, that requires personnel to take demanding courses, often accompanied by tough certification and recertification exams. Second, the job of managing a volunteer department has grown more difficult over the years. Managing a volunteer fire department is similar to running a business. It requires skill in budgeting, planning, management of capital assets, risk

management, knowledge of tax laws, and familiarity with standards and legal requirements, just to name a few.

Many volunteer departments have begun to recruit attorneys, accountants, and college educated individuals to help with management. In some cases, these individuals serve in administrative capacities only. This does not mean that all recruits must have a college or even a high school education. There are many capable firefighters and EMTs who have excellent practical skills and can pass certification exams even though may not have graduated from high school. However, a volunteer fire department should still recruit people with advanced education to be the future leaders and to assist with the many tasks required to manage the organization successfully.

DAYTIME AVAILABILITY

Many volunteer departments lack adequate staffing during daytime hours. As a result, they are always on the lookout for recruits that could alleviate this burden. Individuals that are self-employed are considered especially valuable. They often have flexible hours and can respond during the daytime. Some departments try to get their self-employed members quickly qualified as drivers so they can count on having a driver during the day.

People who have night jobs are another group that is usually available to respond to calls during the daytime. A third group is those able to leave work during the day. This number is constantly getting smaller. Often it is the smaller, local and/or family owned business that will allow employees to leave. Another source is to use employees of local government like the public works department.

GEOGRAPHICALLY WELL-LOCATED

When there is a choice, departments prefer candidates that live or work in close proximity to the station or response area. This helps maintain short response times and a closely-knit social group tied to the community. One department places a high priority on recruiting members who work within two blocks of the station.

Many fire departments establish residency requirements in their bylaws that mandate volunteers live within the fire district or first due area, though this may be a problem in areas where housing is expensive, as was previously discussed. Fire departments should eliminate residency requirements. Outsiders make excellent volunteers and should not be excluded from membership as they may work in the district and be available for daytime calls. They might not be able to respond from home to calls, but to fulfill their obligation they can spend free time at the station or work duty nights.

YOUNG FIREFIGHTERS

Young firefighters are needed to keep feeding “new blood” into the department and to undertake many of the physically demanding jobs on a fire scene. Young people can add enthusiasm and motivation to a department that is comprised mostly of older members. Younger members are often in school or just starting a career, and do not have families. That gives them more time to devote to the department.

The drawback is that young people are more likely to move on or find other interests. They also

Note: Each state has rules that govern child labor practices and set age limits. These must be reviewed before implementing a junior program. For additional information on state labor laws, visit www.osha.gov.

may lack maturity and require special direction and oversight. Some departments consciously avoid young people for these reasons, but most departments put a premium on finding young members. Many departments attempt to recruit young people in high school or just after they graduate in order to catch their interest before they become intent on something else.

To identify and train recruits under the age of 18, many departments start a cadet program, a junior firefighter program, or a Fire Explorer Post. These programs usually emphasize learning, safety, and staying in school.

CADET TRAINING INFORMATION

The National Volunteer Fire Council, working in conjunction with the Boy Scouts of America, can provide fire departments with information and tips about starting a cadet Explorer program. Call 1-888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832) or visit www.nvfc.org for more information.

Fire departments in New Jersey are targeting recruitment efforts at high schoolers across the state. When New Jersey started a new statewide recruitment campaign, it created a recruitment video written for high school students. The free video was distributed to every public and private high school across the state and is shown as part of the high school civics class curriculum. Other states have adopted this campaign and video. For more information, see the 1-880-FIRE LINE section of this report. Fire departments in some areas have developed high school technical classes in EMS and firefighting to enhance recruitment.

PREVIOUS PUBLIC SAFETY EXPERIENCE

Perhaps the most valuable skill to look for in a recruit is previous service as a volunteer or career firefighter. The mobile nature of today's society means that volunteer firefighters frequently move from one area to another. Career firefighters often move to suburbs to get better housing at a lower cost. Both of these groups are desirable candidates for volunteering and should be targeted for recruitment.

Sheriffs, highway patrol, local police, reserve police, and paramedics are other public safety personnel favored by some departments. The involvement in public safety gives them added skills. Law enforcement members can act as a liaison with police and sheriff organizations. Paramedics may be able to teach EMT or First Responder classes. A paramedic recruit could be a leader in adding new advanced life support services.

One caveat about experienced firefighters: some may enjoy telling their new, small volunteer department how little it knows. An experienced firefighter from a larger city may fail to recognize that a smaller fire department runs differently and must rely on the cohesiveness of the group. Recruits with this background need to be screened and counseled for a smoother transition. If they cannot blend in gracefully, a department may be better off without them.

SPECIAL SKILLS

Departments should actively seek recruits with special talents to increase the range of services and skills they offer. Some examples are:

- **Physicians and Nurses.** Some departments designate physicians as the “Medical Director” or “Department Surgeon,” and give them a red light or department vehicle. They are easily trained to the Paramedic level. Some states, such as Virginia, allow doctors and nurses to directly challenge EMT tests without taking the full class. Doctors, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners can be recruited to give physicals to members.
- **Lawyers and Accountants.** Some volunteer departments recruit lawyers or accountants to volunteer. Since most volunteer fire departments are corporations, these individuals can provide necessary and free guidance to the Board of Directors or Trustees. Accountants can help departments file annual tax returns and perform annual audits. Lawyers are usually willing to consult with their fellow department members about issues of liability and possibly even more personal matters, for example, wills, trusts, and other legal issues.
- **Teachers** not only bring a myriad of skill sets to enhance knowledge and skills, but also have extended periods of time off from the classroom.
- **Fire Protection Engineers, Sprinkler and Fire Alarm System Contractors and Inspectors** are keenly aware of fire protection and safety issues.
- **Restaurant cooks** are considered desirable because a good chef can raise morale, and often knows where to buy food in bulk at a discount for department fundraisers, such as breakfasts and barbecues.
- **Truck Drivers** are familiar with driving large apparatus, can help train others, and improve the safety of department drivers.
- **Construction workers** can teach members about building construction and may be familiar with building codes.
- **Trades workers** such as electricians, plumbers, and HVAC specialists can all bring experience that is valuable on the incident scene and at station.
- **Scuba divers and boat operators** are great for fire districts that contain water areas. They can spearhead the development of water rescue teams.
- **Salespersons, reporters, marketing professionals** can serve as a Public Information Officer, grant writer or oversee recruiting outreach, fund drives, etc.

WHO SHOULD DO THE RECRUITING?

Although most departments try to involve all of their members in the recruitment process, not all volunteers believe this is a good idea. Some members do not want the job of recruiting new volunteers because of the great responsibility and demand placed on volunteers today. This perception reinforces their belief that the department should rely on people who walk in, or that the chief should be the main person to recruit.

Most department, however, find that they must include all members in the recruitment process. The philosophy is that everyone has a responsibility to help sustain the organization by bringing in new blood. Face-to-face recruiting by members can produce many new members, but advertising, mass mailings, and other methods are also important. Since the majority of new members generally come from direct referrals of existing members, fire departments that do not include the general membership in recruiting will struggle more with having enough bodies than those departments that make recruitment everyone's job.

MEMBERS

To get every member of a department to take part in recruiting, each volunteer must be aware of who is in charge of the process and what the recruiting procedures are. In addition, the members must know how to answer routine questions that a prospective recruit might ask.

If a department wants to involve all of its members, there are some very simple things that can enhance their capability. Each member should be given department business cards or a departmental recruiting flyer to hand out among friends, family, and prospective volunteers. If this is not economically feasible, members should conscientiously write down the name, address, and phone number of people who express an interest and turn them over to the recruitment committee or coordinator. Members should also be given a recruitment handbook that contains flyers that provide an overview of the department, photos, membership opportunities, benefits, roles of volunteers, and requirements.

Some departments have adopted the "each one, reach one" policy, which requires each member to recruit at least one person in a year. Other departments require each member to bring at least one new person a year to a departmental recruitment informational session (discussed later), even if the person ultimately decides not to join. As an incentive to recruit, the member who recruits the most new members is given an award by the department (a dinner, weekend getaway trip). Both of these scenarios, however, could drive active members away so be cautious when implementing recruiting programs that place the onus on the members.

RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE

Many departments select a few members to run the recruitment process, often called the recruitment or membership committee. These individuals can be nominated by the department, or volunteer to do the job themselves. Their job should be to screen new members who are referred by the general departmental membership and coordinate recruitment efforts all year long. It would be beneficial to recruit a personnel or human resources individual to assist this committee.

RECRUITMENT COORDINATOR

Some departments nominate a recruiting coordinator to spearhead the process. Other departments believe that it is the chief's job to recruit and set the tone for the department, and not rely on others to recruit. Most departments prefer formally appointing an individual to serve as the department's focal point for recruiting. The coordinator can orchestrate recruitment by all members; conduct a membership needs assessment; formulate recruitment messages and materials; do some of the recruiting directly, and arrange for others to help; and interview prospective members; and answer their questions. In one department, the recruitment coordinator telephones people new to the area; this department's waiting list recently approached 24 interested people.

The recruitment coordinator and public information officer should work together to contact the local media to run stories or recruitment PSAs. This job also can be undertaken by a non-firefighting public relations person assisted by a firefighter, or by a member who is no longer active, but has good public relations skills.

COUNTY VERSUS DEPARTMENT, DISTRICT, OR CITY-LEVEL RECRUITING

When there are multiple volunteer departments within a county, recruiting may be done in a centralized or decentralized manner. Some counties recruit for all of their volunteer departments together, while in other countries each department is responsible for its own recruitment process. Many communities are moving toward county-level recruiting to increase efficiency, and to reduce discrimination or bias in the recruitment process.

WHERE TO LOOK

Some departments are fortunate to have a sufficient amount of walk-ins and direct referral from members to fill their needs. Many departments, however, need to be more aggressive in their recruiting efforts. Below are places recommended to seek out new members.

Places to Look for Volunteers

- Personal acquaintances of existing members
- Door-to-door
- Dedicated recruitment telephone line
- Newcomers to town
- Schools (high schools, colleges, technical schools)
- Retirement homes
- Civic organizations and churches
- County fairs
- Resort populations
- Local businesses
- Events around town
- Utility companies and county workplaces
- Military bases

- Other emergency service organizations
- Local stores; government offices, agencies, or departments; restaurants; and gyms
- Publicly staged training events

PERSONAL CONTACTS

As noted previously, the most common source of new recruits is referrals by current members or family members. Many departments rely on their members to recruit. They prefer people whom their volunteers know and often require candidates to get one or two members to sign their application as co-sponsors.

Virtually any place that volunteers go can be a good place for recruiting - parties, meetings, clubs. As suggested earlier, give members something tangible that they can give out to interested friends and contacts - a pamphlet or brochure, business cards, or applications. A department in North Dakota personally contacts particular individuals in the community who are thought to be good candidates and gives them applications. This is highly flattering to the individuals contacted and has been very successful.

DOOR-TO-DOOR

Some departments go door-to-door to recruit. This can be done in combination with home fire safety inspections or fundraising. Firefighters in one area offer residents safety checks on weekends, and in another they offer free smoke detector checks. As the firefighters go door to door, they also recruit.

DEDICATED RECRUITMENT TELEPHONE NUMBER

Some departments use a dedicated telephone number with an answering machine that interested potential volunteers can call to get information or leave their names and telephone numbers for a callback. That number can be listed on all recruiting literature, in ads, and on flyers. Recruiting from messages left on the machine is highly efficient. The national 1-800-FIRE-LINE recruitment campaign, discussed later in this report, used this approach to get information about prospective members. The Virginia Office of EMS also has a statewide recruitment line, 1-888-EMT-HERO.

NEWCOMERS TO TOWN

Volunteer departments should make a special effort to reach new people in town to explain the function of the department and its membership options. The fire department can include this information in literature disseminated by welcome wagons, the chamber of commerce, realtors, and others.

In some areas, newcomers come predominantly from cities that do not have volunteer fire departments. They may not understand the organizational structure of a volunteer department, nor the potential for joining. The department may need to make a special effort to reach these people and explain the membership options.

A department in Texas identifies new homes under construction and has members visit them to do a pre-fire plan. At the same time the volunteers contact the homeowner to introduce themselves, their services, and their needs - and indirectly try to interest the newcomer in the department.

SCHOOLS

High Schools - High schools are good recruiting grounds. Recruitment materials can be sent to parents and teachers and disseminated on career days. However, it is even better to work directly on educating guidance and/or career counselors on the benefits of being a volunteer and to have a booth at career fairs. Departments can also tie recruitment efforts to their visits to schools to give fire education and safety lectures. High visibility helps the department make contacts at the school and sparks the students' interest. A program of a student shadowing a firefighter might be started to blow on the sparks of interest.

Explorer, Junior, and Cadet programs are a more organized way to encourage young peoples' interest in the fire department. Some fire departments run programs that accept youths as young as age 13. They train the cadets like recruits. When the cadets turn 18, they can join the department as full members. Most departments require the parents of recruits to sign an approval form and liability waiver. Because the children are still in school, departments involved in these programs usually stress that education is very important and that their volunteering should not be done at the cost of their schoolwork. Some departments require that their cadets maintain an 80 percent grade average in order to respond from school or participate. There is much experience to suggest that cadet programs help rather than hinder youths to do well in school.

Colleges/Universities - Departments that are in or near college towns can recruit students to serve as firefighters during their college stay. Some departments offer a live-in program where the participants are given free room and kitchen privileges in return for volunteering. Live-ins may be required to serve weekend duty and must attend all fires and drills. The main drawback of this program is that students eventually graduate after two to four years and leave the area. However, the pool of student members is constantly refreshed by the new students. This does serve to create educated people with a knowledge of emergency service who may go on to volunteer elsewhere or serve the fire service in some other capacity.

Fire Protection & EMS Classes - Recruitment materials and videotapes can be shown at public CPR classes, public fire education and safety sessions, fire prevention talks, and community EMT classes. The class participants have already expressed an interest in helping others by taking the class.

Some departments are located near junior colleges or four-year colleges that have fire science or fire engineering programs. These students benefit from getting hands-on experience with a department and sometimes even receive credit for volunteering. If they come from outside the volunteer department's area, they may not last more than two or three years; but they will be energetic and devote their time to the department during that period.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Retirement homes are a rich source of people who could serve in a non-emergency capacity. Retired persons often look for ways they can give back to their communities. Fire departments should approach the activity coordinator for a retirement home to set up a meeting at the retirement home to educate residents about volunteer opportunities.

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS AND CHURCHES

In many areas, clubs and civic organizations such as the Elks, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and Knights of the Columbus are very prominent. These groups have civic-minded citizens who volunteer for many activities. Some may be interested in volunteering in the fire service. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and church meetings are other good places to openly recruit or leave recruiting materials. Some churches even agree to make announcements from the pulpit or in their newsletters.

FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Neighboring Departments - Sometimes volunteers have trouble with one department and decide to volunteer for a neighboring department. Many ethical questions arise as to what best solution to this problem is. It is important to understand why the volunteer left the neighboring station in the first place. It may be helpful to discuss these issues with the neighboring station. It is important that the situation does not discourage the volunteer; it may be more important to save the volunteer and let them transfer rather than lose him or her. However, it is important to understand whether the tension arose from the conduct of the volunteer or from the neighboring department itself. It is very important to keep in mind the fact that everyone is working towards the same cause and competition among departments is discouraged.

Career Departments - Firefighting is often viewed as a life choice, not a career choice. Many career firefighters are willing to join a volunteer department. They are excellent recruits for a variety of reasons: they have training, prior experience, knowledge of the area, and can be available during the day. However, the Fair Labor Standards Act prohibits career firefighters from volunteering in the same capacity in a fire department in the same jurisdiction in which they work. Volunteer departments may wish to consider looking for career firefighters in neighboring jurisdictions.

COUNTY FAIRS

County fairs are often good sites for recruiting booths. Fire and EMS units are usually present for display and should have volunteer applications and information on-hand.

RESORTS

During the in-season, population swells enormously in resort areas. Demand for services, especially EMS, also rises sharply. Resorts are good places to advertise for volunteers for the entire region, as well as for the department that protects the resort. Resort areas attract many healthy, able-bodied young men and women who are oriented towards physical activities.

Fire departments can recruit volunteers to serve only during the tourist season to help handle the surge in calls. Sometimes they can be recruited from the visitor population itself, or from volunteer firefighters from other areas who take jobs in the resort area during tourist season. Some departments in resort towns allow a few out-of-town volunteers who have relocated for the resort season to sleep at the station. This is a major incentive for recruiting volunteers in resort areas.

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Recruiting from nearby local businesses, with their permission, is especially useful because the volunteers would be available during the workday; a time when many volunteer departments have difficulty getting adequate turnout.

While some local businesses frown on their employees leaving to answer a call, others pay their employees extra if they volunteer. A mining company in the Southwest pays an extra 50 cents an hour to volunteer firefighters. So do some lumber industries in California. The companies feel that having a volunteer on site promotes safety and provides them with fire protection and EMS capabilities.

One department developed a rather unusual arrangement with a local trucking business. It recruited the company to volunteer its services to provide the water supply. The trucking company members are not trained as firefighters - their sole job is to provide tanker service. This effectively extends the manpower of the department.

Some businesses have developed a schedule for their volunteer workforce which lists a roster of who will respond during calls. This assists the business with the employee scheduling so that large numbers of employees will not leave the workplace all at once to respond to a call which would impact the business operations. Also, this type of system may make businesses more agreeable to allowing volunteers to respond during business hours.

EVENTS

Large Fires & Other Emergency Events - Major fires and other incidents that draw large crowds of spectators can be good places to recruit. They show that the department provides exciting and important services. Have recruiting brochures available on the apparatus.

Publicly Staged Events - Fire departments can use Fire Prevention Week as a chance to show off apparatus and attract younger firefighters. Other events that are good for recruiting are:

- Parades
- Demonstrations (fire safety education)
- Washing fire apparatus every Saturday
- Hosting gatherings for local political candidates

At all such events, the members should have informational flyers and applications to hand out.

UTILITY COMPANIES AND COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Law enforcement officials, gas and electrical utility workers, public works employees, recreation employees, and other local workers make good volunteers and can provide special assistance in their areas of knowledge. County workers employed in road and park maintenance and utilities are often well-positioned during the day to respond to calls.

MILITARY BASES AND PERSONNEL

Military bases are a fertile ground when looking for volunteers - among currently enlisted personnel, recently discharged personnel, and retired. Military personnel are accustomed to discipline, are usually physically fit, have a history of service, and often have acquired relevant skills. It is particularly valuable to find individuals trained in military leadership.

OTHER EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

Citizens who have volunteered their assistance in the time of an emergency are often well suited to be volunteer firefighters. People offer their hands to help at community disasters ranging from floods to hurricanes. They may fill sandbags, rescue victims, or clean up debris. It is a good idea for the community to keep a list of all those that came out to help, not only to honor them for a job well done, but also to issue them an invitation to join the fire department on a longer term basis. They have already shown that they have something to give. It is up to the fire department to show the need.

LOCAL STORES, GOVERNMENT OFFICES, RESTAURANTS, AND GYMS

Recruiting posters should be placed in stores, offices, meeting halls, local government offices, restaurants, and other places the public and specialized audiences visit regularly. Local gyms are also a good location; the clientele is usually active and physically fit.

TRAINING THE PUBLIC

Having regularly scheduled education programs for the public at the station not only provides an excellent public service, but also opens the department's doors to prospective members. These programs can include training in CPR, babysitting, public fire education, and safety classes.

RECRUITING MESSAGES

Volunteer departments need to consider what messages to send out to prospective recruits. Many departments have a reluctance to advertise; however, unless the public is made aware of the need for additional volunteers, few if any, will show up at the station. Advertising thus is a key to recruiting. Some recruiting slogans are targeted towards a general audience and others to a particular group (e.g., high school students, experienced firefighters, or night workers).

Three different messages need to be given to a prospective recruit: first, the need for their services; second, the personal rewards, benefits, excitement, and fun of volunteering; and third, the hard work and realities.

Developing a theme for a recruiting campaign can be very effective. A catchy phrase used constantly is likely to be remembered. For example, New York State has an effective message that is short and simple: "Volunteer for Life." It has a triple meaning: volunteer to save lives, volunteer to improve your own life, and volunteer for a lifetime commitment.

A great deal of energy and cleverness has been expended on a wide assortment of recruiting materials across volunteer America. Departments should check the materials available from their neighbors, other regional departments, the United States Fire Administration, and the National Volunteer Fire Council. When considering the use of these materials, find out if they have been effective, determine what research was behind them, and see if they were used in circumstances similar to your own.

MESSAGE EXAMPLES

In addition to the more commonly used message to recruit volunteers - render service, get excitement, learn new skills - some departments have added new approaches:

- “Can you fill these boots?”
- “Is your job as rewarding as saving a child?”
- “Decide for yourself.” (laying out a challenge)
- “Part-time heroes needed. Full-time rewards.”
- “Being a volunteer firefighter offers one reward few other jobs can match.”
- “Ready for a change?” (pictured with fire gear or EMS jumpsuit)
- “You’ll need more than the right shoe size to fill these boots.” (pictured with a pair of fire boots)
- “Today’s volunteer firefighters wear many hats.” (pictured with firefighters in bunker gear wearing different hats to symbolize their daytime jobs)
- “Be part of the team.”
- “See the action.”
- “Bet you can’t do this.”
- “We saved lives last night, what did you do?” (used in Hanover County, VA)

Some feel that it would be useful to have a national recruiting slogan for volunteers, something that worked similar to U.S. Army’s “Be all that you can be” slogan.

VOLUNTEERING AS CAREER ADVANCEMENT

A powerful message for recruiting young people is that volunteering increases their chances of getting a job as a career firefighter. In many departments, volunteering is a stepping stone to full-time firefighter jobs. Although some volunteers are lost to career departments, most volunteer fire departments believe their image as a career stepping stone is advantageous for attracting young volunteers. In reality, only a small number of volunteer firefighters become career firefighters. And, in many cases, career firefighters return to volunteer.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE JOB

Some departments, instead of presenting prospective recruits with a rosy picture of camaraderie and glory, go out of their way to paint the reality of being a firefighter. They tell prospective members about the true “nature of the business” (see below) including the rewards of volunteering as well as the time demands, requirements, and stress. Although this may turn away some, it weeds out those who do not realize what volunteering is really like, and who otherwise might quit after only a few months.

“The Nature of the Business”

A Picture of What It's Like to Volunteer in the Fire Service

The fire and rescue service is one of the most diverse and challenging professions today. It is the diversity that inspires most men and women to enter the service - both as volunteers and career employees. Imagine having to train to prepare yourself to cope with situations which range from building fires to childbirth to hazardous chemical spills to heart attacks, and almost any imaginable emergency situation in between. This diversity is coupled with the fact that these skills may be needed at any time of the day, seven days a week, in any kind of weather and very often under potentially stressful and emotional circumstances. These challenges contribute to our profession being personally rewarding.

As volunteers, we are here for two basic purposes. The first is to prevent fires or medical emergencies from occurring. This is achieved through fire prevention, health maintenance education, inspections, fire safety education, and code enforcement programs. Secondly, we are here to prepare ourselves to control fire or medical emergencies, should prevention fail. This is done through education, training, pre-incident planning, more training, state-of-the-art equipment, and more training. We are a paramilitary profession working in a “hurry up and wait” environment.

This business is not for everyone. You need more than just a desire to help people. You need courage and dedication, assertiveness, and a willingness to learn new skills and face new challenges. And you need to have the time, for training session, meetings, emergency calls, maintenance of equipment, and other duties. The fire and rescue service is not for the meek or timid or for those who lose control during times of crises. Our service is one which calls on its members to perform hot, sweaty, dirty, and strenuous work, often in uncertain and hazardous environments.

The personal rewards and satisfaction received from the fire and rescue service are often beyond description. There is a sense of accomplishment after controlling a building fire, joy and elation when a child is born, compassion for accident victims, and fulfillment in teaching fire safety. This list goes on and on.

The bottom line in our business is measured by the loss of life, pain and suffering, and property damage we have prevented or reduced. We are here and prepared for one reason, and that is to provide service to the people.

If you feel you have what it takes to meet the challenges of our business, we welcome you to join us.

FIREFIGHTER CHECKLIST

Instructions: The following items must be completed in order to successfully complete the one-year probationary period. The Fire Chief may extend the probationary period 6 months. After each item is complete you are responsible to have the item initialed by an officer, acting officer or firefighter to verify completion.

Date Completed	Initial	Contact*	Task Completed
			Complete and Turned in Application
			Turned in Drivers License Copy
			Completed Interview
			Enrolled in Volunteer Relief & Pension System
			Received Protective Clothing/Pager
			Received Orientation Manual and IFSTA Essentials 4th Edition
			Completed Medical Documents
			Completed Physical
			Completed Orientation Session
			Completed Reading Policy Manual
			Assigned to District Team
			Completed Mapping of District
			Completed 1st Aid Class
			Completed CPR Training
			Completed 10-11 Vehicle Check
			Completed 10-51 Vehicle Check
			Completed Recruit Academy
			Received SCBA Training
			Completed EVAP Classroom
			Completed Initial Driver Competency Course
			Completed 1st Responder or EMT Training
			Completed Pump Operator Training Classroom
			Completed Pump Operations Practical

**Under contact, place the name of someone in your department who would be in charge of signing off on that item.*

USE OF VARIOUS MEDIA

A wide variety of media has been used to aid in recruiting. They include television, radio, newspapers, flyers, posters, paper bags, billboards, bus signs, restaurant place mats, and many more unusual ideas.

TELEVISION, RADIO, AND PRINT MEDIA

There is much debate about which medium works best for recruiting ads: television, radio, or print. Some feel that public service announcements on a local television channel are better than ads in local papers. Some departments use short radio clips. Others feel that word of mouth is more effective than any formal advertising.

The majority feel that newspaper advertisements have not been very effective for recruiting. However, most departments have not found or invested in high quality print ads, such as the ones in the New Tools Kit that the National Volunteer Fire Council distributes to its members. The kit was developed by volunteer firefighters working with a top advertising firm. Departments can use these ads from the NVFC kit alone or as a supplement to other recruiting measures.

“Newspaper advertisements can be very effective so long as they communicate the right message. Emphasis should be on professionalism, training, excitement, meaningful service, and traditions. Be sure to emphasize your group is an equal opportunity organization which does not discriminate on the bases of sex, race, age, religion, or creed.”

One department reported that small want ads in the local newspaper brought in more applicants than general-purpose large ads. Many people screen the want ads for a variety of reasons and are looking for new opportunities and excitement.

News Stories and Features - Several departments have found it rewarding to cultivate friendships with the media and encourage them to run stories about the department. Keep the media involved by inviting them to drills, to ride along, or to become a member. The media assists recruiting best by giving publicity to the fire department's successes and events, and featuring articles on individual members. Attempt to have a story on fundraisers, election of officers, or new equipment purchased at least monthly. Ideally, the stories also should mention the ever-present need for good volunteers.

In order to assist the media in promoting the visibility of individual members, the department can hire a photographer to take a publicity picture of each member. These pictures can be supplied to the press for either small background stories or major fires. This also aids in retention, by promoting recognition.

Local Access Cable Television - An excellent way to reach the public with information about the fire department and the need for volunteers is local access cable television. It is much easier to place a Public Service Announcement (PSA) on a cable channel than on larger network channels. Cable television also offers the flexibility of showing longer PSAs than most networks, which generally offer only 15- or 30-second PSA slots. Some departments have the cable provider videotape a PSA that tells about the department, the roles of volunteers, opportunities for volunteers, and requirements of membership.

VIDEOTAPES AND MULTI-MEDIA SHOWS

Videotapes, CD-ROMs, or DVDs can be an excellent medium to use in recruiting. One department asked a local retired TV cameraman to help develop a PSA videotape of the department in action that it could show on television and at civic club meetings. “Put together an informative program on the department that any member would be able to give. Include audio-visuals. Nothing will sell your department better than some great actions shots,” says the chief. “People will automatically imagine themselves in the situations pictured.”

It might fit departments to do a multi-media presentation - hearing, seeing, and doing. A department representative could give a lecture (hearing), supplement this with a video or PowerPoint presentation (seeing), and then have the prospective members perform an action such as don a turnout coat and/or SCBA (doing). This can be a very effective way to sell the department.

BROCHURES

A brochure can be a good companion to a videotape. It should include action photos to grab prospective recruits' attention. The rest of the brochure should provide information that prospective volunteers want to know about your department.

- What is the role of volunteers (i.e. firefighting, EMS, prevention, administrative, or support)?
- What are the time requirements?
- What are the benefits?
- What are the minimum qualifications?
- What training is required?
- Who can be contacted for more information? Include the name of the recruitment coordinator and the department's phone number (if an answering machine or voice mail is available).

Brochures and flyers can be placed at local businesses and handed out at department functions. They need to be colorful and attractive with the vital contact information like a phone number with an answering machine or voice mail when no one is present, email address, or department website. These may be printed at no cost if the department allows the printer to place a logo and/or courtesy line on the materials.

DIRECT MAIL

Some departments mail a brochure or newsletter to the homes in their recruiting area. This may be a one-shot mailing or a mailing on a quarterly or annual basis. The newsletter describes what it takes to be a volunteer and the need for members. Departments can also include flyers in fundraiser mailings or utility bills. Some departments stamp the message “Volunteer” or “Join the Team” on all outgoing mail.

The results of direct mail may be immediately apparent. Some departments say they do not begin to see a return until almost a year after the mailings went out. However, the flyer is what caused the recruits to think about volunteering. Generally, a customer has to see an advertisement several times before they purchase a commodity. Thus, multiple exposures may be necessary.

POSTERS

Posters are an excellent recruitment tool. They should show members so that the public can see who in their community is a volunteer. They may show members in action, or as the Firemen's Association of the State of New York has done, they may show members in work clothes to show the backgrounds and types of people who volunteer.

SIGNS AT STATIONS

The old-fashioned way still works: displaying a sign or banner outside the fire station stating that the department is looking for a few good volunteers. Signs need to be simple, direct, and include how to contact the department. Walk-ins will not feel as hesitant to stop by if they see a sign welcoming them at anytime. Some departments place signs at their response boundaries indicating that the area is served by volunteers. This could incorporate a "help wanted" message. Signs might be donated if the provider's logo and/or name is displayed for advertising purposes.

ADVERTISEMENTS ON APPARATUS

Recruitment messages should be advertised on the side of all fire and EMS apparatus. The messages can be permanently painted on or temporarily displayed using magnetic signs. Every time that a unit is on the road the public will see the message.

INFORMAL STATION OPEN HOUSE

This should be done on training nights so both the public and prospective recruits have the opportunity to meet several officers and members and learn what the department really does. This enables those interested to see what volunteering is all about and at the same time make contact. Always have applications available. A variation on this theme is to hold a formal open house to attract community residents explaining how their dollars are spent and possibly recruits.

MOVIE THEATERS

Some departments have asked movie theaters to include a volunteer recruitment ad in the slides they project before feature presentations. A department could even produce a short film advertisement that the theater could show with movie previews.

WORLD WIDE WEB

More and more volunteer fire departments are advertising the need for members on the world wide web. The public may visit a fire department's web site for safety tips or to become acquainted with fire and EMS protection services where they live. This is another easy avenue to advertise the need for members.

OTHER PLACES TO ADVERTISE

- Restaurants can use placemats with the local volunteer department's recruitment message imprinted on them. This was done statewide by fast food restaurants in New Jersey as part of the 1-800-FIRE-LINE recruitment campaign.
- Pizza delivery restaurants can attach a flyer on each pizza box they deliver.
- Grocery stores can print recruiting messages on their receipts and bags.
- Newsletters published by local nursing groups to recruit EMS members.
- Utility company bills. New Jersey also advertised for volunteers in an electric company bills statewide for free.
- New Housing Developments: Allow newcomers to community to be aware of the need for volunteer firefighters.

INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS

Every department should set aside one night every month or every few months to hold an informational session for prospective volunteers. The purpose of this session is to provide an overview of the department, volunteer opportunities, and requirements and expectation. "Too many departments fail to provide prospective members with the information they need to make a decision about whether volunteering is right for them. Our department has found that by holding prospective member nights every few months, we are able to inform every prospective new member about how they can serve the community and what will be expected of them," said the chief of the Cherrydale (VA) Volunteer Fire Department.

Prospective member sessions allow possible recruits the opportunity to make an informed decision about whether they have what it takes to volunteer. There is also a question and answer period. "We may get ten calls a month from people interested in joining. We tell them to attend the informational session, which is good for them because it answers their questions, and which is good for us because we can explain all of our requirements in one big swoop to everyone," the chief said. The sessions save a lot of time in the recruitment process.

Informational sessions also discourage people who do not have the time or what it takes to volunteer. They help to avoid situations where people join, find out that volunteering is not what they expected, and then suddenly quit.

Fire departments should give a comprehensive overview of the "nature of the business" (discussed previously) at informational sessions. Firefighter and EMT "job descriptions" should be developed and distributed with other handouts. A sample is shown in the following box.

Keys to a successful recruit informational session:

- *Provide an overview of the organization.*
- *Explain the department's mission and "the nature of the business".*
- *List opportunities.*
- *List requirements and expectations (training, fund raising, administrative, duties, hours per month).*
- *Hand out job descriptions (see sample).*
- *Be honest, and tell it like it is!*
- *Give a tour of the station.*
- *Answer questions.*

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Volunteer Firefighter

Purpose: To prevent fires or medical emergencies from occurring and to control fire or medical emergencies, should prevention fail.

Responsibilities: To support the department in all activities including emergency response, training, fundraising, maintenance, and other special activities. Required to attend business and other organizational meetings.

Time Required: One 12 hour weekly duty shift; one monthly business meeting (every first Wednesday night of month); one monthly station/equipment shift (approximately 2 hours); one monthly four hour training session (every third Wednesday night). Also required to complete Firefighter I course (approximately 100 hours) during first year of membership.

Qualifications and Special Skills:

- a) minimum 19 years of age
- b) clean and neat appearance
- c) sound physical conditions as evaluated by physician
- d) not convicted of a felony
- e) pass probationary trainee test within 6 months of joining
- f) pass physical agility test
- g) pass interview by membership committee

Recommended Period of Commitment: The department requests that new firefighters commit to serving at least two years after Firefighter I training is completed.

Supervision: Provided by line officers

Benefits: In addition to great personal satisfaction about serving society we offer reimbursement of training expenses upon successful completion of courses; life and injury insurance; free passes to department gym, free alphanumeric pager service; special recognition awards.

Evaluation: At end of first 6 months; once annually thereafter by chief and duty shift officer

Adapted from Virginia Office of EMS job description for EMTs

SCREENING RECRUITS

Even though most volunteers are not screened as thoroughly as career firefighters, the changes in career tests have influenced volunteer recruit screening. Some volunteer departments have requirements as strict as career departments. On the other hand, some volunteer departments do no screening at all.

There needs to be a balance between having no criteria, and having standards that are so difficult and restrictive that prospective recruits are scared away. There are many ways to identify people who can safely perform firefighting duties and are worth the time and effort to train. It is up to the department to find a process that is fair and balanced.

WHO TO ACCEPT

When determining the types of people to recruit, department leaders should consider the department's culture as well as its needs. Is it a "take anyone" culture - finding tasks for anyone who applies? Or is it a department that prefers everyone to meet the same standards? The more narrowly focused the culture, the more difficult it will be to recruit, but that may pay retention dividends. The ideal is most probably somewhere in between. Not everyone is suited to be a member of the emergency services; and yet with the various needs of the service, many can find productive roles.

When there is a large pool of people interested in joining, the volunteer company can be more selective. Otherwise, the department may have to broaden its criteria so that a diverse pool of people is used to fulfill various tasks. However, even when a department has plenty of recruits, it is important to consider whether it has the full range of necessary skills, not just sheer members. Having a waiting list of 50 firefighters with no desire to be EMTs is useless if the department's primary need is EMTs.

It is recommended that departments screen prospective members carefully and not accept everyone who applies. Having a smaller cadre of strong, mature, and committed members is preferable to having a large number of members, some of whom are less committed or problem makers. A large group that has problems will cause more internal problems and require greater time to manage than a smaller, stronger group. Internal problems often drive members out or burn-out officers.

MOTIVATIONS

It is important to know the reasons people join or do not join. This information can be obtained by simply asking prospective members about their motivations for joining the department before they actually join. The object of this research is insight. It helps recruiters understand whether the prospective member has the right motivations for becoming a firefighter or EMT, which is a good indicator of whether the person will be a good match.

Some people may not have the right motivations for joining, and these people most likely will not be good, long-term members. Motivations may also be misguided. It is important for members to recognize that it is detrimental to the cohesiveness of the department if their personal problems interfere with their work or the work of others.

The reasons for volunteering may change with economic shift and with other societal issues. When money is tight and people are working two or more jobs to make ends meet, they may struggle to find time to volunteer. Others, however, may want to volunteer as a stepping stone to new positions, especially a firefighting position.

At the end of the day, the reasons for volunteering are individualistic and locally driven.

TESTS AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

Volunteer departments sometimes require a recruit to pass one or more of the following: a written exam, a physical agility test, or a medical exam. There is general support that testing of recruits is a means to determine whether recruits will be "fit" for the job. Administrative recruits are usually excluded from physical, medical, or written exams.

Leading Reasons For Becoming a Fire or EMS Volunteer

- *Need for a sense of belonging to something important*
- *Desire for achievement*
- *Increased responsibility*
- *Desire to face a new challenge*
- *Recognition and reward*
- *Desire for growth and development (possibly for other careers)*
- *Need to have fun*
- *Enjoying one's environment*
- *Helping the community*
- *Sense of obligation to the community*
- *Helping a fellow person in need*
- *Possibly saving a life*
- *To someday become a career firefighter*
- *My neighbor is one*
- *I had a fire once and want to help protect others from that sort of devastation*

Source: Snook and Olsen

2004 Field Survey Sampling

The responses received to the St. Joseph's University query in 2004 on what makes an individual want to volunteer were as follows:

- *Response to emergencies*
- *Helping neighbors*
- *Family tradition*
- *Be part of a team*
- *Social opportunities with members*
- *Develop experience dealing with fire/rescue/medical situations*
- *Career development*
- *Feel needed*
- *Personal skill and knowledge development*
- *Responsibility/challenge*
- *Need for affiliation*
- *Hobby*
- *Associate with success*
- *Feel safe*
- *Follow a leader*

Some departments are against rigorous testing because they are so short-handed that cannot afford to screen-out anyone who is willing to volunteer. Others support rigorous testing to eliminate those candidates who would not be able to meet the physical challenges of the job. It is recommended combination departments requires all volunteers to pass the same written, physical agility, and health exam given to career members. This eliminates the potential for one group to say it is more qualified than the other.

Some departments dropped the written test because many of the applicants were intimidated by it. Regardless of the circumstances, tests are good tools to screen-out candidates who may be too unhealthy to perform duties safely, or unable to pass the rigors of fire or EMS classes.

Recent mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have made the physical screening procedures more complicated. The degree to which this law applies to volunteer departments is not completely clear. In some areas, the law has been interpreted as applying to both volunteer and career employees. As a result, there have been changes in screening procedures for many departments. One department in Arizona is not allowed to require a medical exam, while other departments are allowed to require a medical exam and a driving record check - such is the diversity and different interpretations of the law from place to place. ADA is more likely to apply to departments that pay their volunteers or consider volunteers as employees for benefit purposes. Each department should consult an attorney for information about how ADA applies. For further information visit www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/.

INTERVIEWS

Almost all departments interview each prospective recruit. The interview process is designed to examine motivations (*see section on Motivations*) and to ensure the recruit understands the requirements.

There are a variety of methods that departments can use to conduct interviews. Most departments use a formal interview process. A formal interview helps stress the seriousness of firefighting and that joining should be a conscious and informed decision. Some give the interview before the written exam, and others after. Departments may use an individual or panel to run the interview. In small departments the chief usually conducts interviews. A department recommended that an interview board comprise two members from the department and one member from the department's governing authority (Fire Board, City Council).

Some departments use a more subtle approach. They encourage prospective recruits to attend a company meeting where members can meet them. If the recruits do not come, they could be dropped for lack of interest. Volunteering "has to be one of the volunteering person's priorities," said the chief.

DRIVING AND CRIMINAL RECORDS

Most departments have established relationships with local law enforcement officials to review an applicant's driving and criminal record. Some states require the permission of the applicant before doing the search. Application forms often ask the applicant to agree to driving and criminal checks. Failure of applicants to agree to the checks may be cause for not accepting them.

Departments agreed that background checks are imperative. Volunteer fire departments cannot afford to accept a "bad apple" who will create problems or spoil the department's image. Most

departments will not accept candidates with felony convictions, although some departments forgive almost any crime or violation committed when the applicant was a youth. Other departments, however, accept adult felons who have served their time and appear rehabilitated. They view serving in the department will help keep the person on a healthy path. These departments must remember that there could be outcry if the public learns that a member is a convicted felon. Most departments refuse to accept anyone with a history of arson whether or not time was served. Some departments also refuse people convicted of driving while intoxicated within the past five years, or at a minimum, allow these individuals to join but restrict them from driving department vehicles.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

In some areas, recruits have to prove U.S. citizenship. If the department volunteers are paid-on-call, they are considered to be employees under tax laws. Citizenship or a green card is then required.

COMMITMENT AGREEMENTS

Fire departments may request that new members sign a commitment agreement. The purpose of a commitment agreement is to lay out expectations on paper so that there is no misunderstanding about what the department is asking a member to do.

Recruits should also be asked what they expect from the fire service. In turn, they should be told what is expected of them. This may eliminate some people immediately before going through the lengthy application process.

Commitment agreements are generally non-binding because the members are volunteers. Some departments, however, require recruits to sign a binding commitment that states they will reimburse the department for training expenses if they leave before serving a minimum period of time. An example of a commitment agreement is shown in the box below.

SAMPLE COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

To the Officers, Board, and members of the Gorman Volunteer Fire Department (GVFD). I present myself as a candidate for membership, and if accepted, I will cheerfully subscribe to the constitution, bylaws, orders, and procedures of your department.

I have read fully and understand the application information package. I understand that volunteering can be a rewarding experience but there are certain obligations I must meet in order to remain in good standing in the department. I agree to attend the monthly meeting and training session; to complete Firefighter I training within the first year of my membership; to be on call for my one assigned duty night per week; to assist with the department's fundraising efforts; and to assist with maintenance and other tasks as assigned. If I cannot meet an obligation, I will notify the appropriate officer or Board member immediately to request to be excused. I further agree to carry through with any responsibilities that I may take on as a member. If I fail to meet the obligations, I realize that my membership may be suspended or terminated by the Chief or Board of the GVFD.

I promise that while I am performing volunteer duties, I will act responsibly, ethically, and maturely. I understand that at certain times, information I obtain as a firefighter and EMT must be kept confidential, and I promise not to breach confidentiality. I will also proudly wear my uniform in a clean and professional manner. I will do my best to protect and serve members of my community, and I will support the department to the best of my ability. I always will remember that safety is a priority while performing my duties in this department.

I promise to pay all dues and fees of the department when due. I also promise to return all items issued to me by the GVFD.

I understand that I am in a probationary, non-voting status during my first six months as a member in the department. The probationary period ends only after an affirmative vote by the general membership of the GVFD.

I further promise to notify in writing the Board of the GVFD if and when I must terminate my membership with the department or if I would like to request a leave period.

By my signature, I understand and agree to carry out the promise made above.

Signature

Date

FOLLOW THROUGH

Fire departments must follow up with prospective members at two key times to ensure their continued interest: immediately after they express an interest in volunteering and during the first three to six months after they join in the department.

FOLLOW-UP ON INITIAL CONTACTS

Any inquiry from a prospective volunteer should be followed-up with a phone call. The contact can be brief and to the point. The main purpose of the call is to schedule an informational meeting with the prospective recruit. The appointment should be made for a time that is convenient to the applicant. The department should also mail out a brochure that answers a recruit's most common questions.

Some departments try to meet with candidates at their home. This process includes the family or "significant other" from the beginning, setting a positive tone for the future. The department can explain to the applicant and his or her family the time commitments, the rewards, and the social aspects of volunteering. This practice is especially important for applicants coming from ethnic backgrounds or immigrant families that may harbor suspicion about authorities with badges.

FOLLOW-UP AFTER ACCEPTANCE

There are a variety of approaches a department can take to reinforce the new volunteer's interest. New members should be promptly involved in department activities so they can overcome their anxiety about becoming part of a close knit group. Give them responsibilities in line with the talent and expertise they bring to the organization. The existing members should take this time to learn more about the new member. They should remember that the new volunteer probably will reevaluate his or her commitment soon after joining. As a result, it is important to pay special attention to the new volunteer during his or her first few months or even year. Most departments also require new members to attend a minimum number of meetings and training sessions to get them started quickly, ensure they are "kept in the loop," and to test their commitment early on.

An orientation program should be developed to educate new members how the organization works, incorporating activities that train them about their position. The session should detail programs and services and establish the new personnel as members of the organization. The first part of the orientation should explain the operational activities and policies and procedures of the job. The second part should be more interactive and stress the practical field operations.

New members should be given an Orientation Package when they join. This should include a number of items like the following:

- Organizational By-Laws
- List of members and name of personal "Coach"
- Rules, regulations, and policies
- SOPs and SOGs
- Training requirements
- Safety, driving, and response procedures
- Appearance, uniform, and equipment responsibilities
- Benefits, insurance, and social amenities

Ways to Follow-up with a New Member

- *Assigning a mentor to each recruit*
- *Involving recruits in simple tasks on the fireground as soon as possible (i.e. changing air bottles, assisting in retrieving equipment, etc.)*
- *Allowing recruits to ride initially as observers*
- *Issuing recruits alphanumeric pagers so they can receive department-wide announcement of meetings, events, and fires*
- *Inviting recruits to department social functions*

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAVE

A department should offer several places along the path to membership for a recruit to reevaluate the situation and if necessary, leave the process gracefully. Anyone can drop out at any time, but it is kinder and better for public relations to offer an opportunity to leave if the recruit is not suited to the rigors of volunteering.

BARRIERS TO RECRUITING

Fire departments must consider barriers to recruiting as they formulate and begin their recruiting processes. Although some of these obstacles can be reduced, others need to be met head on and dealt with accordingly.

EXCLUSIVITY IMAGE

It is important for a fire department to be aware of the image they are portraying to the community and prospective volunteers. A fire department needs to appeal to a diverse crowd. They should clearly state in their recruitment literature the need and desire for all types of people and skills.

Departments that already have females and minority members should encourage them to become involved in the recruitment process. Recruiting the first woman or minority in the department is often the hardest step. It usually requires a special effort, such as actively recruiting females and minorities that are friends or family members of current members. Minority and female recruits would probably feel more confident and motivated entering a department where they know someone. It is the department's responsibility to make people of different backgrounds feel welcome.

TRAINING BURDEN

The increased amount of training required today not only causes some members to quit, but it is also a barrier to recruiting. Some departments are working on reducing their requirements and training hours to appeal to more people (e.g., requiring personnel to certify only as a firefighter or EMT, not both). Other departments, however, want members who can handle the toughest schedule. They feel that a rigorous training program will serve as an incentive and a challenge to the kind of recruits they want. Tough standards and training can also enhance the image of the organization. Perhaps what really needs to be done is a realistic evaluation of the training needs of the department based upon community hazards. Then emphasize the basics, making the specialized training optional. A vital component to this is then to perform the training in a step-by-step process. Design the training modules in time blocks that the volunteers can adjust to their schedules and provide the training when they are available, perhaps some optional time offerings. Consider the use of non-traditional educational methods that would allow volunteers to meet required standards. Another key is to provide the training schedule well in advance so the members can adequately plan for it.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

In many metropolitan areas and resort communities, the cost of living is too high for an average income family or individual to live comfortably. As a result, people are moving farther out to smaller communities. A residency requirement - having to live in the community served by the department - eliminates prospective candidates who live outside the community in more affordable places but are willing to commute to volunteer. They may have longer response times and be less tuned in to the community than residents; but if there is any question of the adequacy of the volunteer pool, residency requirements should be eliminated. The problem of response time may be eliminated with duty hours. Also recognize that someone living just outside the jurisdiction could actually live closer to the fire station from which they would respond than another member in a remote part of the jurisdiction.

Another alternative to solving the residency problem is to provide affordable housing to members. A solution might be the construction of attractive apartment buildings to house volunteers at no cost or low cost. Some fire departments allow a limited number of members to live in the station permanently. As noted earlier, this is a commonly used approach to attract students in university towns.

TENURE REQUIREMENTS

Some departments require new members to sign a contract or agreement to volunteer for a specified amount of time. This ensures that the department's investment is returned and that the member gives the job a chance. If the member leaves prematurely, there is a requirement to repay training costs. Tenure requirements generally are not considered a barrier to recruitment unless they require new members to sign-on for more than a one year commitment.

RECRUITING SPECIAL GROUPS

Society's diversity is not as well-reflected in most volunteer fire departments as it is in the general work force. However, the mix has been changing. Many volunteer departments by choice or mandate are seeking groups that they traditionally would not have recruited such as females and minorities. By adding diversity, they ensure well-rounded teams that better reflect their communities. They also increase the pool of talent available for recruiting and may fill needs more easily such as workday availability. In addition to minorities and women, many other groups who may not be well-represented in volunteer ranks merit special attention such as white collar workers, retirees, and college students.

FEMALES

The number of females joining volunteer fire departments is increasing all over the country. Their numbers are still small, and in some departments zero, but the overall trend in the volunteer fire service is upward. Some departments actively recruit female firefighters while others wait for female walk-ins.

Many departments find it difficult to recruit females for the volunteer fire service. Typical stereotypes may discourage women from joining the department. To avoid this image, departments should:

- Have female firefighters speak to possible recruits
- Have female firefighters actively recruit other females
- Promote a positive image of the department's acceptance and fair treatment of its members
- Have written policies protecting against sexual harassment and discrimination, as well as formal grievance procedures
- Place pictures of female firefighters in recruitment flyers
- Explain any special accommodations for women (such as separate bathrooms or bunkrooms)

Some females may think they will not have time to volunteer because of commitments with their children. Others who are considering having children may fear the consequences of being injured as a firefighter while pregnant. There are several ways to address these concerns.

- **Offer periodic leaves of absence for family purposes.** Pregnant female members should be encouraged to take a leave of absence or go on light duty until authorized by their doctor to return to active response. These should be offered both to female and male firefighters. Members should not be penalized for taking leave.
- **Create a departmental babysitting service.** Some departments even pay for this or can have the wives of members provide the service. Departments can also organize babysitting programs at the fire station where an administrative member can look after the children in a safe area of the station. The department would need to purchase toys, designate a safe area and be aware and familiar with state and local childcare regulations.

Fire departments should recruit females right out of high school when they have fewer responsibilities or when they are single and are more willing to adapt their lifestyle. Women who become involved at a young age are more likely to stay on the department when they later have children.

One caveat: recruiting females, especially single females, often causes concern among the spouses of male members. In some cases, men have quit due to the pressure received at home. This jealousy can be ameliorated somewhat by having the male firefighters' wives meet the female firefighters at social functions. It is also important to remind members and their families that this is a professional organization where members are held accountable for their actions, just as in a career work environment.

HISPANICS

Volunteer departments in areas with a large number of Hispanics should take advantage of this large pool of potential recruits. Some volunteer departments in south Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona already have Mexican-American majorities in their membership. Having members that speak another language can be an invaluable asset for any department. Hispanic volunteers can speak Spanish to victims, patients, and family members on emergency calls. Below are some tips for recruiting Hispanic members:

- **Approach Hispanic communities with recruiting messages in both Spanish and English.** This is often essential in convincing the prospective recruit's family members who might not speak any English or prefer to speak in Spanish. It also shows that the department wants to incorporate different cultures within the fire family.
- **Offer to help them learn English and help with their studies for citizenship in return for volunteering.** Many departments that pay their members a stipend are required to have U.S. citizens as volunteers for tax reasons. This arrangement could solve both problems.
- **Advertise for volunteers in Hispanic newspapers** or other Hispanic media outlets.

- Have Hispanic firefighters actively recruit other Hispanics.
- Place pictures of Hispanic firefighters in recruitment flyers.

AFRICAN AMERICANS

Most fire departments have difficulty in recruiting African Americans as volunteer firefighters, even in areas where they are the majority. Some departments have tried recruiting at predominately black churches, colleges, and civic groups with minimal success. Nevertheless, there are many avenues to try, such as the following.

- Advertise for volunteers in African American newspapers or other African American media outlets.
- Have African American firefighters actively recruit other African Americans. This can be done one-on-one and by videotaping messages of what it is like for an African American to serve as a volunteer in the community (i.e. use a role model).
- Place pictures of African American firefighters in recruitment flyers.
- Approach leaders in the black community to discuss the challenge and its solution.

NATIVE AMERICANS

Native Americans are a minority group that may be decreasing in numbers as volunteer firefighters. Departments neighboring reservations have not been very successful in recruiting members from the reservations though many Native Americans serve as seasonal wild land firefighters.

Departments near reservations offer several explanations for the problems with recruitment and retention of Native American members. Many Native Americans tend to live isolated from one another, spread out over open spaces. This makes it difficult to volunteer because the response time is so high.

A former fire chief in New Mexico suggested recruiting Native Americans through four modes:

- School children who take the message home to their parents
- At trading posts where recruiting posters and literature can be left
- By word of mouth
- By tribal newspaper

Here, too, a role model can be helpful in portraying the satisfactions of volunteering.

OTHER MINORITIES

Many minorities from third world immigrant families come from places that do not have a volunteer tradition similar to an American volunteer fire department. The concept of volunteering to wear a badge and uniform, performing a service without receiving pay, and endangering oneself may pose cultural difficulties for these individuals or their families. Some third world nations view people with a badge as a menace or corrupt, and do not want their children or relatives involved. Left unaddressed, these pressures can build up to force people to not volunteer and even distrust the fire department. A prospective member's family may need some counseling by officers from the department to clarify any misconceptions. The counseling might be done at

home, or the family can be invited to the station. The family should also be encouraged to meet other members' families at department functions.

WHITE COLLAR WORKERS/COLLEGE STUDENTS

Many people enjoy a change of pace in their lives. A volunteer fire department could be the perfect place for a white collar worker to do something different, but volunteering as a firefighter is often seen as a blue collar activity. The department's recruitment literature should help dispel that myth by showing different kinds of people doing different jobs. A woman teaching public fire education, a young man doing computer work, or an older man directing traffic are good examples. This lets the prospective volunteer know that a fire department has varying needs and types of people.

College students are usually intelligent and able-bodied. The main liability in recruiting them as volunteers is that they usually leave the fire service after one to four years. However, a relationship may be struck between a volunteer department and a local college to identify a continual stream of students to replace those that leave. Students who graduate may elect to live near the college or may volunteer in the community where they settle.

RETIREES

Areas that attract many retirees can often be a bonus for a volunteer fire department. Many of the retirees will still be in good health and may have an interest in volunteering. They can be given light duty tasks or resume limited firefighting activity at incident scenes or provide EMS response. Those that will handle non-firefighting jobs help free up the other members to focus on active firefighting at calls. This is often essential in departments are short of fully operational members.

THE ANNUAL RECRUITMENT PLAN

A successful recruitment program is ongoing all year long. Each department must determine for itself what is the best approach to find the members it needs based on its own individual needs assessment. As sample of how a department can address recruitment on a monthly and annual basis is shown in the following:

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CALENDAR

Ongoing Process to Improve Recruitment, Retention, Image and Visibility of the Department

January

- Hold prospective volunteer information session at firehouse
- Send media press release documenting amount of time volunteers gave and number of calls answered in final quarter of last year
- Request membership nominate outstanding members for awards ceremony in February

February

- Recruitment committee interviews prospective volunteers from January information session
- Convene awards committee to select awards recipients
- Issue outstanding member awards at annual department banquet
- Issue award for member who recruited most new members in past year at annual department banquet

March

- Hold prospective volunteer information session at firehouse

April

- Send media press release documenting amount of time volunteers gave and number of calls answered in first quarter of the year
- Recruitment committee interviews prospective volunteer from March information session

May

- Hold prospective volunteer information session at firehouse
- Set up recruitment booth at town fair

June

- Recruitment committee interviews prospective volunteers from May information session

July

- Send media press release documenting amount of time volunteers gave and number of calls answered in second quarter of the year
- Hold prospective volunteer information session at firehouse

August

- Recruitment committee interviews prospective volunteers from July information session

September

- Hold prospective volunteer information session at firehouse

October

- Have Town Council issue resolution to commend volunteers for past year's service
- Launch membership drive for fall in conjunction with publicity from resolution and fire prevention week
- Hang membership drive banner at station
- Send media press release documenting amount of time volunteers gave and number of calls answered in third quarter of year
- Recruitment committee interviews prospective volunteers from September information session

November

- Hold prospective volunteer information session at firehouse
- Arrange for high school civics class to show 800-FIRE-LINE recruitment video in 11th-grade civics courses townwide

December

- Submit annual report on fire department to town council
- Recruitment committee interviews prospective volunteers from November information session

Ongoing

- Mail out recruitment flyers as requested by members of the public
 - Feature a fire department member and family in monthly department newsletter
-

THE NATIONAL 1-800-FIRE-LINE RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

1-800-FIRE-LINE is a national recruitment campaign for the volunteer fire and EMS services, along with a means for interested citizens to obtain information about Fire Corps programs in their community. The campaign was founded in 1994 by a group of New Jersey fire chiefs who were concerned about recruitment and retention in their state. The campaign gives the public a simple, toll free telephone number to call for information about both operational and non-operational volunteer opportunities in their community, and is coordinated by the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). In addition to the traditional role of providing a statewide means of answering questions about opportunities to become a volunteer firefighter or EMT, 1-800-FIRE-LINE has added the new role of being a point of contact for Fire Corps.

Fire Corps, one of the five partner programs of Citizen Corps, works to encourage citizens to assist their local fire departments and rescue squads in non-operational or support roles. Information on how to implement Fire Corps within a department is available at www.firecorps.org. Once a program is started it can be registered on the website to help interested citizens contact the department and have it included in the national directory.

Citizen advocates who aid departments in non-operational activities allow first responders to focus their efforts on being prepared for and responding to the most critical, life-threatening situations. Everyone can do something to support their local fire service. Here are some suggestions gathered from America's own firefighters for possible Fire Corps program activities:

- During times of heightened national security alerts, assist in planning for quick access to stocks of emergency supplies, shelter readiness, and procedures review
- Promote fire prevention in schools and homes
- Develop websites and computer programs for the department
- Provide back up support during major events when response agencies may be overwhelmed initially
- Assist with fire incident reporting and enter statistical data
- Help write grant applications
- Assist with public relations
- Organize fundraising initiatives
- Assist with youth mentoring programs
- Check and install smoke alarms for low income families or for people with disabilities
- Provide administrative and clerical support
- Assist with canteen services at major incidents
- Assist with typing reports, answering telephone calls, managing records, and other office tasks
- Assist with mitigation measures: wildland vegetation removal near structures, floodproofing, non-structural earthquake resistant measures
- Organize with community programs, such as roadside cleanup, food drives, and toy collections for families in need
- Provide foreign language translation of safety literature and outreach materials
- Offer to serve in a department's auxiliary
- Help to improve understanding of specialized fire/EMS organizational services like hazardous materials response, urban search like hazardous materials response, urban search and rescue (USAR), youth services, water/mountain rescue, billing services, etc.
- Develop informational newsletters to include holiday or seasonal-oriented fire injury prevention messages
- Members of the faith-based community can provide counseling and other services
- Assist with development and maintenance of fire department

Because not everyone has internet access, one of the ways citizens can obtain information about Fire Corps is by calling 1-800-FIRE-LINE.

The campaign can be adopted by a state firefighters association or other state fire agency and once adopted is implemented statewide. When a state joins it connects the toll free number to a statewide answering point. When a call from any area code within that state is made to 1-800-FIRE-LINE the call is routed by the phone company to that answering point. Over 35 states have adopted the program, and the remaining states are answered by the NVFC. Assistance is available for those remaining states that would like to implement the service. Please go to www.nvfc.org for more information.

The NVFC has a web site dedicated to recruitment and retention at: www.nvfc.org/retention.html

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

There are a few factors to the recruitment and retention problem that need to be emphasized. The solutions need to be determined locally. What works in one department or company may not work in the one two miles down the road. This manual has included a variety of points so alternatives can be considered and used as they work in the local area. However, it basically all starts at the top with good, effective leadership. If the administrators at the top do not know their personnel, their needs, and how to manage the human aspects of the department, there will be recruitment and retention problems. Consider financial incentives, duty shifts, how training is delivered, and alternative fund raising efforts among the other possibilities of making volunteering more palatable. Active departments have fewer problems. If the number of calls is not enough to maintain interest, an active training program is necessary. Most volunteers are “hands-on” type people and like to be doing something that leads to a purpose. And finally, whatever transpires within the department must be ethical, impartial, and fair to all. Favoritism, cliques, and dictatorships will not only destroy the department, they will stop recruitment and enhance membership decline.

The volunteer emergency services are an extremely valuable national resource, saving taxpayers billions of dollars annually. They are the backbone and spirit of many smaller communities. To maintain these longstanding traditions of volunteering, it is necessary to address the volunteers’ basic needs - to have a sense of belonging, to assume responsibility, to have self-respect, to achieve goals, to be challenged, to be recognized, to grow and develop, to have fun and enjoy life - and when the time demands of volunteering are managed properly, recruitment and retention will be less of a problem.

ONE STATE’S RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT DILEMMA: REPORT FROM PENNSYLVANIA

In 2004, Pennsylvania experienced 17 line-of-duty deaths, the most of any state in the country. At the same time, Pennsylvania has two-thirds less firefighters than in did thirty years ago. Many have questioned if the lower number of members have been a cause for some of the deaths. Chief Fred Bales of the Greenfield Township Fire Department has stated that fewer personnel on the fireground can force firefighters to do the work of two or more people in emergency situations. Pennsylvania Fire Commissioner Ed Mann reports that 9 of the 17 deaths were caused by heart attacks. He further commented that it is possible some of those nine were working too hard to make up for a lack of firefighters.

The following comments are taken from the recently complete SR 60 Report for the State Legislature:

“The drop in the ranks of our volunteer emergency services force can be directly attributed to the fact that (in addition to fighting fires and responding to every other imaginable emergency around the clock), our volunteer emergency service responders are often the same individuals who must raise the funds necessary for their own training and a significant portion of their equipment, provide emergency service organization support and administrative services and maintain equipment and facilities. Taken together, the many tasks performed by a decreasing number of volunteers only exacerbates the problem and overwhelms those who remain active.”

“The case for Pennsylvania playing a larger role in helping to maintain the viability of our volunteer emergency service organizations can easily be made in terms of both public safety and dollars and cents. According to a 2001 Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Services Institute Study, the value of the service that our volunteers provide is estimated at \$6 billion.

If we lose our volunteer fire companies and volunteer firefighters, the added taxpayer cost for firefighter salaries and benefits alone is estimated at a conservative \$6 billion annually.”

“According to a survey of fire chiefs jointly undertaken by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Services Institute (2001), 77 percent of fire chiefs responding identified recruiting new members and retaining current members as the two most pressing issues their companies face. More than 70 percent of the fire chiefs responding also said that the state should play a more active role in helping companies recruit and retain members.

The Commission recommends that the General Assembly act as expeditiously as possible to enact a series of incentives to stem the decline in emergency service volunteerism, to help retain the dedicated volunteers we still have and to attract the next generation of recruits in the proud neighbor-helping-neighbor tradition of our volunteer emergency service organizations.”

Operational - Benefits / Incentives

- Tax Credits
- Business Tax Credit for Supporting Volunteer Fire/EMS
- Service Longevity Program
- Educational Benefits
- Provide Health Care Benefit Opportunity
- Create a Permissible Benefits Spending Program
- Waive reporting/fee requirements
- Other types of benefit programs
 - Home Mortgages at lower rates
 - Credit Union

Three interesting recommendations that have been made follow:

Business Tax Credit for Supporting Volunteer Fire/EMS Staff

Issue - One of the most pressing problems we face in our communities is the decline in the ranks of our emergency volunteers. Benefits that directly affect volunteers are most visible and positively impacting on those volunteers. Providing a tax credit to businesses who permit volunteers on their staff to respond to calls or attend training during working hours would provide additional support to our volunteer system of emergency response.

Problem Statement - Legislation is needed to provide incentives to retain dedicated volunteers we already have and to attract the next generation of volunteers.

Resolution - This is one of several incentives designed to support volunteerism, Legislation needs to be drafted. There is a cost associated with this, however, projections can only be made after the type and extent of tax credit is defined.

Create a Permissible Benefits Spending Program

Issue - Create the opportunity for a “Permissible Benefits Spending Program” that brings value to the members of the organization.

Problem Statement - Benefits are only of value to an individual if they mean something to an individual. What benefits an 18-year old, will probably not be perceived the same as a 35 year old with two children, or a sixty year old-35 year veteran. Each organization must develop its own benefit system.

CONCLUSION

Resolution - Funding systems should encourage organizations who inventory on a periodic basis what members seek in benefits and provide more funding to those who have a defined plan to recruit and retain members. This can be made part of Act 84 Reform to permit up to \$575 per person in a “qualified plan”. Other initiatives may be made part of this, such as participation in a credit union and the development of a reduced rate home mortgage.

Provide Health Care Benefit Program Opportunity

Issue - One of the most pressing problems we face in our communities is the decline in the ranks of our emergency volunteers. Benefits that directly affect volunteers are most visible and positively impacting on those volunteers. One such program would be to establish the opportunity for volunteer and non-profit firefighters and EMS personnel who are in need of health care insurance to participate in the State’s health care program.

Problem Statement - Volunteers receive no salary or benefits for their contribution to the state, saving a projected “billions” in tax dollars annually. Many such fire and EMS volunteers leave who are young, or are self employed, and have no opportunity to group health care coverage. The state provides a health care program for its employees. Volunteer fire and EMS personnel, although technically providing services to the state and local communities cannot participate in the program, even if they pay for it themselves.

Resolution - Develop and pass the legislation to provide the opportunity for volunteer and non-profit fire and EMS personnel (including family benefits) who are in need of health care insurance to obtain it through the state’s health care system. The individuals could fund this themselves, or Act 84 monies could be used to provide some of the benefit to the volunteer. (This would require modification to Act 84 as well.)

However, Commissioner Mann may have summoned it up best when he said the firefighting culture needs to change and more people need to volunteer. “The culture of the fire service is that we care so much about others that we neglect to care for ourselves. And that’s something that has to change.”

The entire report can be found on the web at: www.pfsei.org

Additional comments from Pennsylvania:

“The public may not understand why it takes us 15 minutes longer to respond to a call because there isn’t enough manpower,” Mr. Mann said. “They also don’t understand why there’s 12 apparatus with three people on each at one scene, so we have the necessary crew on a call.”

Mr. Mann also spoke on the importance of re-evaluating the distribution of state funds, working jointly to obtain grants and to open communication with local government leaders and the public.

“How many out there are spending more time raising money than anything else?” Mr. Mann asked. “Chances are you’re not getting enough appropriations from your local government.”

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Retention and Recruitment Project Survey by the Public Safety Institute at Saint Joseph's University

CURRENT THOUGHTS AND RESEARCH IN VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

This Retention and Recruitment Project was developed under the direction of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), VFIS, and the Public Safety Institute at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia.

The project was designed to survey the volunteer emergency service community addressing three issues relative to recruitment and retention:

- What Makes Members Want to Volunteer?
- What Keeps Volunteers Serving?
- What Makes your Members Leave Your Organization?

All respondents were asked to check applicable factors. They were also asked to rank the highest three factors, assigning a number from one to three to represent the three factors having the greatest impact related to the topic.

Although all surveys were completed and all surveys identified relevant factors, not all responses rated the highest three impact factors. Charted data reflects the top total number of responses for each factor. The second set of data reflects the frequency with which each factor was rated as #1, #2, or #3 in terms of significant impact.

This report will look at the most significant factors relative to each of the three questions and, in addition, will include the data for each of the three questions. This report will also address several broad issues related to recruitment and retention, followed by comments about several factors that were ranked high in the responses.

RECRUITMENT ISSUES

Factors with a high rate of response that were identified as reasons that “Make Members Want To Volunteer” include ‘response to emergencies’ (ranked #1), ‘helping neighbors’ (#2), ‘family tradition’ (#3), and ‘social opportunities’ (#5).

These factors are truly altruistic and are a large part of the cornerstone of the volunteer fire service. The fire service is a natural place for people to serve their local community.

Survey responses indicate that the number #4 factor in this questionnaire was ‘being part of a team.’ Teamwork is essential to a successful fire company operation and its importance appears recognized by survey respondents.

Ironically, in responses related to “What Makes Members Leave Your Organization,” management related issues (‘conflict in organization’, ‘organizational leadership creates adverse atmosphere,’ etc.) were identified as significant factors.

It would appear that these issues could be addressed and improved upon with strong leadership. The officer corps must realize the value of positive reinforcement for individual members and they must understand that constant criticism will tend to drive people from the organization. A healthy organizational climate is one that constructively addresses issues that need correcting but also enthusiastically recognizes the positive contributions by individual members.

RETENTION ISSUES:

Financial issues ('state/local tax credits,' 'length of service award,' 'tuition credit/ reduction') ranked as the top three factors under "What Keeps Volunteers Serving." Although financial incentives can help individual members offset personal financial costs, the ability to provide this type of remuneration will vary from community to community.

In addition, social aspects ('friends/families also members') and personal satisfaction ('praise') were high-rated factors.

When looking closer at "What Makes Members Leave the Organization," management related issues ranked high in the responses. The number 1 cause for people leaving the organization is 'No Time to Volunteer.' There is not much a fire company can do to solve this.

But four of the next six responses were related to conflict within the organization and management related issues. (Conflicts in organization (47.8%), Organization leadership created adverse atmosphere (46.7%), Attitude of existing personnel to newcomers (39.1%), Criticism received from officers/older members (38.0%)).

It seems that these factors can be changed with training, discussion and a strong will to address the company's shortcomings.

WHAT MAKES YOUR MEMBERS LEAVE YOUR ORGANIZATION?

No time to volunteer: (92.3%)

This was the #1 reason identified by the survey. With personal and family demands, this reason is easily understood. From a management perspective, there is not much the organization can do to address this issue.

Conflicts in organization: (47.8%)

Almost half of the respondents identified this as an issue within their organization. Managing conflicts among firefighters can be an exhaustive, time-consuming, gut-wrenching process. This issue may be easier to manage in career departments because of a more autocratic structure and a clear-cut disciplinary process that is supported by a municipal government.

However, this issue can cause good, productive people to leave the organization. There may be a mindset that since people are volunteering their time, we can't be too demanding or they will no longer volunteer for the company.

How do we solve this issue? It is essential to convince individual members that "What is in the best interest of the fire company" should be paramount for the common good of the organization. Open dialogue, with a goal of conflict resolution is a must if there is to be a positive climate within your company. A positive climate is essential if members are to have pride in their company and feel a sense of satisfaction.

Recognizing this as an issue is the first step in creating a more positive atmosphere. Although there may be a mindset to accept any and all individual members due to the pressures of maintaining membership, perhaps consideration should be given to asking individuals who are consistently creating problems to leave the organization.

Organizational leadership creates adversity: (46.7%)

Almost half of the respondents identified this as a factor within their organization. Ineffective leadership and/or weak leadership have consistently been identified as issues that limit the effectiveness of organizations in all walks of life.

However, unique to many volunteer/combination fire companies is the fact that members vote for some or even all of their officer corp. Problematic for any fire company is a close vote for the chief's position or for the officer corps.

The solution may be to encourage tomorrow's leaders within the company to pursue education and training programs that will help build leadership skills. Understand that there may also be a feeling among some members that education is not needed.

Mentoring can also be a helpful tool. It may help a new member transition into the organization and may guide him through the early phases of his adjustment in the company.

If there is an adversarial climate within the company, recognizing and accepting the fact that an adversarial climate exists may be the biggest problem standing in the way of resolving the issue.

Too much training: (45.6%)

This is a difficult issue to address because of the concerns we have related to the need for training and the safety of our members.

If the volume of training is too much in terms of the amount of time necessary to fulfill minimum training requirements, there probably is not too much that can be done to reduce this without compromising fireground safety or fire company efficiency.

However, if the quality of training programs is contributing to the problem, this can possibly be addressed with more effective planning and preparation of training sessions and subject matter to be covered.

Attitude of existing personnel to newcomers: (39.1%)

Criticism received from officers/older members: (38.0%)

Do these two issues go to the heart of establishing an environment which is conducive to a new member joining the ranks? This is clearly an issue where the leadership of the company has to set an environment to welcome new members and encourage their participation in fire company business.

Also cited was a lack of camaraderie (19.5%) which may have a connection with the environment in the company.

Leadership has to sit down with the membership and set some basic ground rules if the volunteer fire service is to survive. Encouraging new members to become involved in the day-to-day activities of a company is essential. Team building is critical to the effectiveness of a fire company, not only in terms of sustaining membership but also in terms of effectively operating at the scene of an emergency. The lack of fire activity can compound the challenge.

Teaching new members about the traditions of the fire service provides them with an appreciation of our history and the contributions that have been made to society in general, as well as our local communities. But if new members feel a sense that they will not be included in this tradition, they will not stay in the company. It may take time for some individuals to learn and understand the traditions of the fire service and grasp the notion of individual service to the community. This may also be very evident when a new member does not have a relative who was part of the fire service.

Testing an individual's commitment to these traditions and one's understanding of the history too frequently can be felt as harassment or a lack of acceptance on the part of a new member. A strong mentoring program may be able to solve some of these problems. Those selected as mentors must not only have the maturity to be able to help new members, but must also be able to relate to the new member's experience of joining the organization.

WHAT KEEPS VOLUNTEERS SERVING?

State and local tax credits: (77.1%)

When considering the cost savings that volunteer fire companies have yielded to their communities combined with escalating taxes, it is easily understood how individuals have identified this as an issue that should be addressed. Members can easily recognize the significant cost that a municipality would have to fund if the local fire company were not staffed by volunteers. This funding would put tremendous pressure on budgets.

It is interesting that this has been identified as the number one factor in terms of what would keep volunteers serving. Providing financial considerations appears to be a common factor that may ease financial demands on individual members and thus result in continued availability or greater participation and involvement.

Length of service award from fire company/municipality (similar to retirement annuity): (63.0%)

When considering the amount of time that individual members invest in their fire company, combined with financial concerns that people have when contemplating their retirement years, this seems to be an option that should be evaluated. Developing a pro-rated system based on a minimum amount of service and tied to total years of service seems to be recognized as an item for consideration.

Tuition reduction: (59.7%)

Access to group health insurance programs: (45.6%)

Group rates for auto and home insurance: (39.1%)

Access to group dental insurance programs: (32.6%)

Although these four issues are different, the commonality is that they all have significant impact on an individual's personal finances. Logically, if a member has to work additional hours or even a second job to make ends meet, having a benefit that covers one or some combination of these expenses would relieve some of the pressure and potentially permit the individual member to be more involved with the fire company.

Regular purchase of apparatus: (53.2%)

In terms of all responses, this was identified as the fourth highest. This provides an interesting insight in that the "regular purchase of apparatus" goes directly to an individual member's ability to provide service to their community. If the vehicles are older and unreliable, the fire company and the individual members cannot provide adequate service to the people in their community.

The other responses in this section (what keeps volunteers serving?) revolved around individual financial remuneration of some type. This issue of serviceable apparatus has no connection to any personal financial benefit and is clearly reflective of the service-minded, unselfish individuals who have responded to this survey.

Friends/Families also members (fraternizing): (52.1%)

Frequent social activities: (41.3%)

Social activities and camaraderie have been identified as having a positive impact in various types of organizations. Traditional management theory has identified and recognized the benefit that social connections can reap for an organization. Combined with the community-based service mission of the fire service, individuals will get a great deal of satisfaction from their service, especially if it is in an organization where there are personal and social connections.

This can combine to provide an environment where individuals will feel a great deal of satisfaction from their participation in the fire service.

Praise: (44.5%)

People like to receive recognition for their work and contribution to the organization. Perhaps with the fast-paced lives and personal demands placed on people today, there is a failure to recognize and acknowledge the contributions that individuals make. Individual praise is closely associated with a person's feeling of satisfaction towards the organization they serve.

We also see in the survey that a percentage of people have identified "Feel taken advantage of" (11.9%) as a reason why members leave the organization. This is a facet that can be easily corrected with some attention by fire company management.

Cash per call responded to: (41.3%)

This issue raises some interesting responses in discussions with volunteer firefighters. Obviously with 41% of the respondents indicating that this issue would encourage people to keep volunteering, it must be considered and evaluated.

In discussions with some volunteer firefighters, they felt that getting paid to respond to calls was completely contrary to the concept of being a volunteer firefighter.

However, a more plausible way to look at this issue may be that cash compensation for responses will offset any personal financial loss or cost that an individual member would incur. In any event, it would seem that any financial compensation would be little more than a token gesture, certainly not commensurate with any pay scale that would be in place for comparable full-time coverage by a career department.

WHAT MAKES MEMBERS WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Response to emergencies: (83.6%)

Not surprisingly, this ranked #1 in reasons why people volunteer to join the fire service. People who want to do service through volunteering can join a variety of organizations. However, what makes the fire service unique compared to other volunteer organizations is the fact that firefighters assist people who need help during an emergency. So it would be logical that the cornerstone of the fire service (helping our local community) was ranked as the #1 reason for people volunteering.

Family tradition: (61.9%)

Family tradition in the fire service has helped with recruiting members. The potential “next generation” of firefighters has witnessed first hand just how rewarding service to the fire company can be. Through family involvement, children and adolescents recognize and appreciate the positive aspects of the fire service. Camaraderie, social contacts, teamwork and the excitement of responding to emergencies as well as helping people can all be attractive for adolescents joining their local fire company.

Family tradition can provide a good foundation for recruiting. However, it must also be realized that the future of the volunteer fire service cannot solely rely on offspring of current members. There must be a strategy to appeal to other adolescents who would be willing to consider the fire service.

Be part of a team: (55.4)

It is interesting that individuals find “being part of a team” an appealing part of the volunteer fire service. The lack of camaraderie (19.5%), conflicts in the organization (47.8%), and adversarial leadership style (46.7%) were identified as three reasons why people leave the volunteer fire service.

Before joining a volunteer fire company, people envision that teamwork and camaraderie must be part of the culture in order for the organization to function as a well-oiled machine. Yet after they join, the atmosphere in the fire company does not encourage them to stay.

The recognition, value and appreciation of “teamwork” must be constantly integrated with fire company activities. This is the challenge for management.

Social opportunities: (48.9%)**Need for affiliation: (29.3%)**

People recognize and value the social opportunities afforded by one’s affiliation with a fire company. It would seem that social opportunities are easily scheduled and afforded to members within most volunteer fire companies. Recognizing the “need for affiliation” by members goes hand-in-hand with individuals wanting to be part of a team. Fostering a “team atmosphere” would seem to be extremely important.

Helping Neighbors: (81.5%)**Feel needed: (41.3%)**

The unselfish willingness to serve by members of the volunteer fire service is reflected in these two responses.

Recognizing that they can make a difference within their local community is a catalyst for joining and serving their company.

Career development: (42.3%)**Personal skill and knowledge development: (39.1%)**

It would appear that some individuals believe serving in a volunteer fire company can be a springboard to a career in the fire service. As some volunteer departments are becoming combination departments, having an individual who has volunteer background can be very beneficial to the combination department. Volunteers becoming career members of a combination department can appreciate and respect the value that the volunteers give to their department. Likewise, the combination department will reap the benefit of an individual who is already trained, who has experience and who is familiar with the firehouse culture.

APPENDIX B:

Department of Labor Statistics for Not Volunteering in 2004

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF MAIN REASON FOR NOT VOLUNTEERING

Characteristics in Sept. 2005	Total (Thousands) ¹⁾	Total	Burnout Not Enjoyable Previously	Family Responsibilities or Childcare Problems	Health or Medical Problem	Lack of Time	No one Asked	No Longer a Member of the Organization	Wasn't Interested	Moved, Lack of Info 'Transportation or Expense' ²	No Longer Required not Relevant to Current Life Situation	Other	Not Reporting Reason for Not Volunteering
SEX													
Both	37,677	100.0	2.0	9.3	15.2	45.6	2.9	1.9	3.9	3.9	4.9	9.0	1.3
Men	16,640	100.0	2.0	5.4	11.5	50.9	3.5	2.0	4.8	3.8	4.9	9.8	1.3
Women	21,037	100.0	2.0	12.4	18.1	41.3	2.5	1.8	3.3	3.9	4.9	8.4	1.4
AGE													
Total	37,677	100.0	2.0	9.3	15.2	45.6	2.9	1.9	3.9	3.9	4.9	9.0	1.3
16 - 24	4,569	100.0	0.7	4.5	0.8	64.5	3.1	2.1	4.5	5.8	2.2	9.6	2.0
16 - 19	1,345	100.0	1.5	3.2	0.7	57.5	4.6	3.4	6.2	7.9	3.2	9.2	2.7
20 - 24	3,224	100.0	0.4	5.1	0.8	67.5	2.5	1.6	3.7	4.9	1.8	9.8	1.8
25 +	33,108	100.0	2.2	10.0	17.2	42.9	2.9	1.8	3.8	3.6	5.3	8.9	1.3
25 - 34	6,020	100.0	1.1	14.3	2.2	59.0	2.8	1.5	2.6	4.7	1.9	8.4	1.4
35 - 44	6,236	100.0	1.9	12.7	5.2	57.0	3.3	2.0	2.4	3.2	4.3	7.2	0.8
45 - 54	7,163	100.0	1.8	8.2	9.8	52.4	3.0	2.2	3.1	3.9	6.3	7.7	1.5
55 - 64	5,992	100.0	3.0	9.5	15.8	40.0	2.9	2.3	5.5	3.3	6.6	9.6	1.5
65 +	7,696	100.0	3.1	6.5	46.5	12.4	2.5	1.3	5.4	3.1	6.7	11.5	1.1
RACE / ETHNICITY													
White	32,446	100.0	2.0	9.2	15.4	45.5	2.9	1.8	4.0	3.7	5.2	9.1	1.3
Black or African American	3,199	100.0	3.0	10.1	16.9	42.1	3.5	2.1	4.2	4.4	2.9	8.6	2.3
Asian	1,157	100.0	0.6	11.4	7.6	57.3	1.5	1.5	1.6	5.1	3.4	8.4	1.7
Hispanic or Latino	2,704	100.0	1.6	11.0	9.8	47.6	4.4	3.2	3.6	5.9	3.9	7.5	1.4
EDUCATION ³													
Less than High School Diploma	2,975	100.0	1.6	9.5	39.7	20.3	3.5	1.9	3.2	4.0	5.3	9.7	1.3
High School Graduate, No College ⁴	9,677	100.0	2.6	9.4	21.9	35.1	3.4	2.5	4.4	3.3	7.1	9.2	1.1
Less than a Bachelor's Degree ⁵	10,087	100.0	2.5	10.1	15.0	45.0	3.1	1.7	4.2	3.8	4.9	8.5	1.2

Characteristics in Sept. 2005	Total (Thousands) ¹⁾	Total	Burnout Not Enjoyable Previously	Family Responsibilities or Childcare Problems	Health or Medical problem	Lack of Time	No One Asked	No Longer a Member of the Organization	Wasn't Interested	Moved, Lack of Info Transportation or Expense ²	No Longer Required not Relevant to Current Life Situation	Other	Not Reporting Reason for Not Volunteering
MARITAL STATUS													
Single, Never Married	8,896	100.0	1.4	5.0	5.4	60.1	3.6	1.8	4.6	4.9	2.4	8.8	2.1
Married Spouse Present	20,010	100.0	1.9	11.9	13.2	45.1	2.8	2.0	3.9	3.2	6.1	8.7	1.2
Other Marital Status ⁶	8,772	100.0	2.9	7.9	29.7	31.7	2.7	1.6	3.3	4.5	4.6	10.1	0.9
PRESENCE OF OWN CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS⁷													
Men: Without	13,095	100.0	2.2	3.5	13.6	48.2	3.7	1.9	5.5	4.1	5.4	10.4	1.4
Men: With	3,545	100.0	1.5	12.3	3.8	61.0	2.6	2.4	2.0	2.7	3.1	7.5	1.0
Women: Without	15,941	100.0	2.3	7.6	22.5	40.0	2.5	1.8	3.7	4.2	5.3	8.8	1.4
Women: With	5,097	100.0	1.2	27.4	4.4	45.3	2.4	1.8	1.8	3.2	3.7	7.4	1.3
EMPLOYMENT STATUS													
Civilian Labor Force (CLF)	25,258	100.0	1.9	8.7	3.3	59.6	3.0	1.9	3.4	3.6	4.6	8.5	1.4
Employed in CLF	24,016	100.0	2.0	8.5	3.2	60.7	2.9	1.9	3.3	3.4	4.6	8.3	1.4
Full Time in CLF ⁸	19,761	100.0	1.8	7.9	2.5	63.6	2.8	1.9	2.8	3.4	4.5	7.7	1.2
Part Time CLF ⁹	4,254	100.0	2.7	11.7	6.4	47.2	3.4	1.7	5.4	3.6	4.9	11.0	2.0
Unemployed CLF	1,242	100.0	1.1	11.6	4.8	38.7	5.4	3.8	6.0	8.2	5.3	13.8	1.3
Not in Labor Force	12,420	100.0	2.3	10.6	39.5	17.0	2.7	1.7	5.0	4.4	5.5	10.1	1.3

TABLE 7.

Main reason for not volunteering last year as reported by non-volunteers who had volunteered in the past by selected characteristics, September 2004

1. Data refer to persons who did not volunteer during the survey reference period (September 2003–September 2004), but who had volunteered in the past.
2. Includes the categories lack of information about opportunities, lack of transportation, lack of paid expenses, moved in the last year, and opportunities don't match interest or skills.
3. Data refer to persons 25 years and over.
4. Includes high school diploma or equivalent.
5. Includes the categories, some college, no degree; and associate degree.
6. Includes divorced, separated, and widowed persons.

7. Own children include sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children. Not included are nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and other related and unrelated children.
8. Usually work 35 hours or more a week at all jobs.
9. Usually work less than 35 hours a week at all jobs.
- NOTE: Data on volunteers relate to persons who performed unpaid volunteer activities for an organization at any point from September 1, 2003, through the survey period in September 2004. Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race.

APPENDIX C:

Department of Labor Statistics on How People Became Involved in Volunteering in 2004

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF HOW VOLUNTEERS BECAME INVOLVED WITH MAIN ORGANIZATION

Characteristics in Sept. 2005	Total Volunteers (Thousands) ¹	Total ²	Approached the Organization	Total (2)	Boss or Employer	Relative, Friend, or Coworker	Someone in the Organization/ School	Someone Else	Other	Not Reporting How Became Involved
SEX										
Both	65,357	100.0	40.3	42.8	1.5	14.1	25.9	1.2	14.5	2.4
Men	27,370	100.0	39.1	43.8	1.5	15.4	25.6	1.1	14.5	2.6
Women	37,987	100.0	41.1	42.1	1.4	13.2	26.1	1.3	14.5	2.2
AGE										
Total	65,357	100.0	40.3	42.8	1.5	14.1	25.9	1.2	14.5	2.4
16 - 24	8,955	100.0	39.6	40.6	1.3	16.5	21.1	1.6	16.7	3.1
16 - 19	5,000	100.0	40.0	40.0	0.5	14.8	23.1	1.4	16.7	3.3
20 - 24	3,956	100.0	39.0	41.5	2.3	18.7	18.4	1.8	16.7	2.9
25 +	56,401	100.0	40.4	43.2	1.5	13.7	26.7	1.1	14.2	2.2
25 - 34	9,881	100.0	39.4	44.9	2.6	15.3	25.5	1.4	13.8	1.9
35 - 44	14,809	100.0	40.2	43.3	1.5	13.3	27.5	0.9	14.5	2.0
45 - 54	13,826	100.0	40.2	43.7	1.6	12.8	28.0	1.0	13.9	2.2
55 - 64	9,173	100.0	40.6	42.4	1.2	14.1	25.8	1.1	14.5	2.6
65 +	8,712	100.0	42.1	41.0	0.4	13.7	25.2	1.6	14.2	2.7
RACE / ETHNICITY										
White	56,170	100.0	40.3	43.5	1.5	14.4	26.3	1.2	14.2	2.1
Black or African										
American	5,879	100.0	38.2	39.4	1.5	13.0	23.6	1.3	17.9	4.4
Asian	2,055	100.0	47.0	34.0	1.6	10.8	20.5	0.9	14.4	4.6
Hispanic or Latino	4,511	100.0	40.2	43.7	1.9	14.9	24.7	1.8	13.7	2.4
EDUCATION ³										
Less than High School Diploma	2,837	100.0	40.1	45.0	0.7	15.6	26.6	1.8	12.4	2.5
High School Graduate, No College ⁴	12,594	100.0	39.1	44.3	1.3	15.0	26.7	1.2	14.5	2.1
Less than a Bachelor's Degree ⁵	16,452	100.0	39.6	43.3	1.5	14.1	26.2	1.2	14.9	2.1
College Graduate	24,517	100.0	41.7	42.3	1.7	12.6	26.9	0.9	13.7	2.4

Characteristics in Sept. 2005	Total Volunteers (Thousands) ¹	Total ²	Approached the Organization	Total (2)	Boss or Employer	Relative, Friend, or Coworker	Someone in the Organization/ School	Someone Else	Other	Not Reporting How Became Involved
MARITAL STATUS										
Single, Never Married	14,445	100.0	39.7	40.4	1.6	16.6	20.4	1.6	16.4	3.5
Married Spouse Present	40,611	100.0	40.6	43.8	1.3	13.0	28.3	1.3	13.7	1.9
Other Marital Status ⁶	10,301	100.0	40.1	42.5	1.9	15.1	23.9	1.5	14.9	2.5
PRESENCE OF OWN CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS⁷										
Men: Without	17,618	100.0	38.8	43.3	1.5	16.8	23.5	1.2	14.8	3.1
Men: With	9,752	100.0	39.7	44.8	1.4	13.0	29.3	0.8	13.9	1.6
Women: Without	23,439	100.0	42.0	40.3	1.7	14.8	22.3	1.4	15.0	2.7
Women: With	14,547	100.0	39.7	45.0	1.1	10.5	32.2	1.1	13.8	1.4
EMPLOYMENT STATUS										
Civilian Labor Force (CLF)	46,872	100.0	39.5	43.8	1.9	14.6	26.0	1.1	14.5	2.2
Employed in CLF	44,894	100.0	39.6	43.7	2.0	14.5	26.0	1.0	14.5	2.2
Full Time in CLF ⁸	35,225	100.0	39.0	44.1	2.3	15.0	25.7	0.9	14.6	2.3
Part Time CLF ⁹	9,669	100.0	41.8	42.3	0.8	12.7	27.3	1.4	14.0	1.9
Unemployed CLF	1,978	100.0	38.6	44.2	0.4	15.8	25.7	2.0	15.6	1.6
Not in Labor Force	18,485	100.0	42.3	40.5	0.3	13.0	25.6	1.5	14.5	2.8

TABLE 6.

Volunteers by how they became involved with main organization for which volunteer activities were performed and selected characteristics, September 2004

1. Data refer to persons who did not volunteer during the survey reference period (September 2003-September 2004), but who had volunteered in the past.
2. Includes the categories lack of information about opportunities, lack of transportation, lack of paid expenses, moved in the last year, and opportunities don't match interest or skills.
3. Data refer to persons 25 years and over.
4. Includes high school diploma or equivalent.
5. Includes the categories, some college, no degree; and associate degree.
6. Includes divorced, separated, and widowed persons.
7. Own children include sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children. Not included are nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and other related and unrelated children.
8. Usually work 35 hours or more a week at all jobs.
9. Usually work less than 35 hours a week at all jobs.

NOTE: Data on volunteers relate to persons who performed unpaid volunteer activities for an organization at any point from September 1, 2003, through the survey period in September 2004. Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race.

APPENDIX D:

Fire Corps

Fire Corps: Citizen Support for Local Fire Departments

By Sarah Lee, Director, Fire Corps

National Volunteer Fire Council

In today's world of increasing call volumes, new and complex threats, and the training required to respond to them, many fire departments of all types and sizes are asking one common question; how do we handle the day in, day out administrative and support tasks while providing for the public education needs of the community with the people we have under these new conditions? One answer is Fire Corps.

Launched in December 2004, Fire Corps is a program partner of Citizen Corps, President George W. Bush's grassroots effort to involve everyone in making communities across America safer, stronger and better prepared for emergencies of any kind. Citizen Corps is a component of USA Freedom Corps, the President's initiative to encourage volunteer service and to promote a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility.

What is Fire Corps?

Fire Corps itself is a partnership between the International Association of Fire Chiefs' Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (IAFC/VCOS), the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). Its mission is to help career, volunteer and combination fire departments supplement existing providers by recruiting "citizen advocates."

In addition to the partners, Fire Corps has a National Advisory Committee made up of 15 public safety organizations. The National Advisory Committee's role is to provide strategic direction and to help promote the program. Providing feedback from the fire and emergency service providers as to what is and is not working, along with letting the departments know about the program and its benefits is a critical part of the process of building Fire Corps.

How does it work?

It is well known that a large number of fire and EMS departments already have community outreach or administrative volunteers in their organizations. While the concept is not new, the national campaign along with the resources being made available is. Fire Corps will help fire departments expand programs they already have in place or assist in creating new programs. This will be accomplished through the provision of resources such as marketing materials, resource guides, a national database for listing departments, and peer connections to exchange ideas and ask questions of other Fire Corps programs.

The centerpiece of the program is the Fire Corps web site, www.firecorps.org. From the website, fire departments can register and be listed as having Fire Corps programs, find other programs in their area to observe, obtain or request all of the Fire Corps resources, and sign up for peer connection opportunities. All municipal or non-profit fire and EMS departments and affiliated groups are eligible to register with Fire Corps. Through the same site, citizens can search for registered programs to join, thus making the important first connection between the departments and the citizens they seek.

Who is a citizen advocate?

But who are these "citizen advocates" and what can they do for a fire or EMS department? A citizen advocate is a member of the public who assists a department or organization in some non-

operational or support role. While each program is different and customized to fit the needs of an individual department, the goal of Fire Corps is to involve people of all ages, backgrounds, talents, without regard to any disabilities. In addition to the obvious benefit of the labor provided by the citizens, there is the additional benefit of learning about each other. The public at large does not have a clear picture of what goes on in the fire and EMS services, and some things that are taken for granted by the providers seem confusing to the public. At the same time, with the increasing demands placed on training for more complex incidents, the emergency services do not always have the opportunity to know the community they serve as well as they would like. Fire Corps is intended to give the departments and the community a link to each other to help in educating both groups about the needs of the other.

What can a citizen advocate do?

The possible roles of a citizen advocate in a fire or EMS department are almost endless. If it is not directly fighting fires or saving lives then it is a role they can perform. Some examples include but are not limited to administrative functions, life safety education, fund-raising, canteen services, public relations, and grant writing.

We are only just beginning

Fire Corps is an exciting new program with much potential to support the fire and EMS services and also expand the public education mission of departments across the United States. With Fire Corps goal to help supplement the front line providers in the fire and EMS services and provide a direct connection between departments and the communities they serve, both the departments and the public become better educated in a win-win for all involved. To learn more about Fire Corps please visit us at www.firecorps.org, or contact us at 202-887-4809.

APPENDIX E:

Officer Promotional Process and Evaluation Forms

To: All Members

From:

Date:

Re: Promotional Examination

Any member may apply for and test for promotion. There are four parts to the promotional process.

1. Application
2. Examination
3. Performance Evaluation
4. Scoring

After all four parts are completed an individual score is assessed and a list is established for two years. The person who is number 1 on the list will receive the first opportunity for promotion within that rank tested for should a vacancy occur. The promotion list will be used for a maximum of two years or when the list of names is exhausted.

All applications must be completed in entirety and returned to headquarters by _____. The responsibility to provide accurate and complete data is the applicant. An incomplete application will automatically disqualify the applicant. The test will occur on _____. The examination is comprised of multiple choice questions and is based upon the IFSTA Company Officer manual. To qualify for a position on the list the applicant must achieve a minimum score of 70%. The applicants will be notified of the examination results by _____. The final scores and position will be determined and applicants notified by _____.

**This is merely a sample*

SAMPLE

Application for Position

Name of Applicant _____

Years of Service with German Twp. Fire Dept. _____

Years of Service with another dept. _____

State Firefighter Certification

_____ First Class _____ FF I _____ FF II _____ FF I/II

Master / Advanced Level Certification

_____ Tactics and Strategy	_____ Inspection	_____ Investigation
_____ Management	_____ Haz Mat Technician	_____ Wildland
_____ Special Rescue	_____ Safety	_____ Fire Officer I
_____ Fire Officer II	_____ Public Information	_____ Instructor I
_____ Instructor II	_____ Instructor III	_____ Instructor II/III
_____ First Aid Instructor	_____ Other	

List Specialized Class where certificates were issued when a class was at least 8 hours in length and job related and attended within the last year.

Date of Class	Title of Class	Location of Class

EMS Certification

_____ First Responder _____ EMT _____ Paramedic

Current Rank

_____ Division Chief _____ Captain _____ Lieutenant

I certify that the information that I have provided above is truthful and accurate to the best of my ability.

Applicant

Date

Rank

PROMOTIONAL PROCESS

The person who qualifies for this promotion will be judged based upon the promotion process outlined below.

The exact functions that are assigned to the individual who is promoted will be assigned by the Fire Chief.

The person promoted to this position will be on probation for the first six months of tenure and will be evaluated formally on at least two occasions. There may one extension of probation for a period of three months.

POINT SYSTEM

1 POINT

for each year of service up to a maximum of 5 points for prior service (1/2 point for each year of service with another department up to a maximum of 2 1/2 points)

1 POINT

for Firefighter level certification

2 POINTS

for each earned Master or upper level certification

1 POINT

for each specialized class attended that are determined to be job related within the last year up to a maximum of 5 points

1 POINT

for First Responder certification

3 POINTS

for EMT certification

1/2 POINT

for paramedic certification above EMT points

10 POINTS

maximum for score on examination (1 point for each 10 grade points)

2 POINTS

for current rank of Captain

1 POINT

for current rank of Lieutenant

10 POINTS

maximum for evaluation by current officers

Dear Applicant,

Here is your study material for the Lieutenant examination.

The examination will be based upon information contained within the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 Assuming the Role of Company Officer
- Chapter 2 Fire Department Structure
- Chapter 3 Company Officer's Legal Responsibilities and Liability
- Chapter 4 The Company as a Group
- Chapter 5 Leadership as a Group Influence
- Chapter 6 Elements of Supervision and Management
- Chapter 19 Incident Scene Management
- Chapter 20 Sizeup and Incident Plans
- Chapter 21 Action Plan Implementation

The exact number of questions will not be released prior to the examination. If you have any questions please contact me directly. I am the only one who can provide you with accurate answers about the promotional process.

GOOD LUCK!

ASSISTANT CHIEF

The study material has been placed in your HQ's mailbox on _____.

Your signature below along with the date and time indicates when you picked it up. This signed document should be returned to my HQ's mailbox before _____ at 8:00am to indicate that you have received, understand and read the above the instructions.


Signature

Date

Time

APPENDIX F:


Sample Fire Department Annual Report



Fire Department of Montgomery Township Annual Report – 2004

Bernd G. Heinze – President
David Vasconez – Chief of Department
P.O. Box 18
Montgomeryville, PA 18936-0018
www.fdmont.org

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



A Record Year

The Fire Department of Montgomery Township completed its second full year of operations with a record number of calls for emergency assistance and personnel hours in service, which were surpassed only by the number of hours the volunteers spent training to sustain their capabilities and improve their operations.

The Department ended the year with a balanced budget and with a projection to incrementally continue to expand and improve our services to the community.

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



In 2004 FDMT:

- Responded to 672 calls for emergency services, logging over 3,665 personnel hours in service (or a total of 152.7 days)
 - ▶ 60% of the calls were responded to by volunteers only
 - ▶ 40% of the calls were responded to by the combination of volunteer and paid firefighters

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



In 2004 FDMT:

- The volunteer segment of the Department logged over 4,100 personnel hours in service for training alone (or a total of an additional 170.8 days).
- The volunteer segment of the Department dedicated 4,865 personnel hours in service for Departmental meetings, fire prevention and community activities, fund raising, vehicle maintenance, public education, parades, administrative duties, strategic planning, and other related functions (or a total of an additional 202.7 days)
- This totals over 12,600 personnel hours (525 calendar days) or 1 full year plus an additional 160 days [a total of over 17 months] of time committed to Montgomery Township in 2004 alone.

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT Responds to Community Emergencies

Right place...right time: during a community event on one side of the street, a kitchen fire broke out on the other side. FDMT volunteers were on scene and extinguished the fire before it spread any further.



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



In 2004, FDMT:

- Conducted over 75 fire prevention and community demonstrations on safety and education surrounding fire emergencies to day care centers, schools, senior centers, commercial businesses, educational conferences and in conjunction with other community efforts.



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



Fire Department of Montgomery Township:

Training...



Fund Raising & Autumn Fest...



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT in 2004 by the numbers:

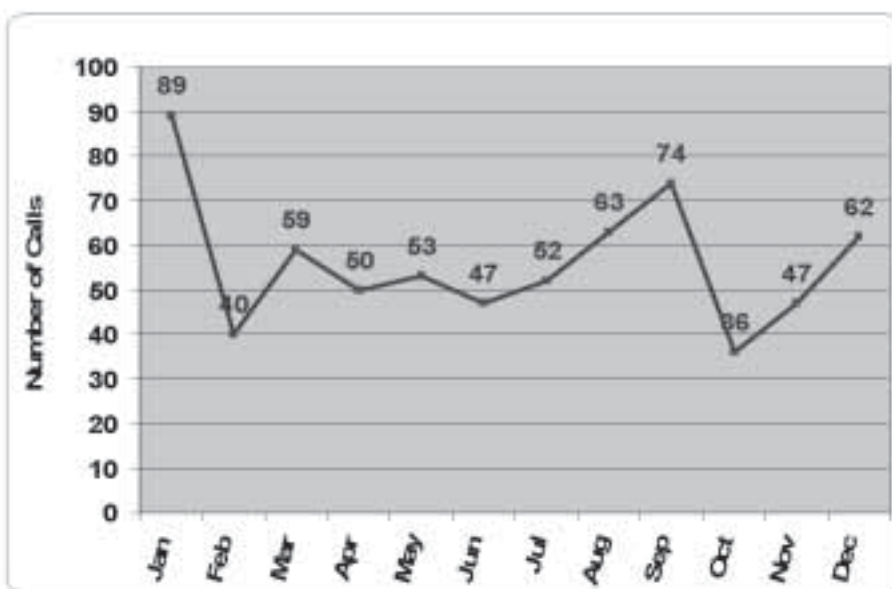
- Total number of calls = 672, a 10.7% increase from 2003.
- Average personnel per call = 11 members
- Average time in service per call = 28.94 min.
- Average response time = 5.15 minutes *
- Total personnel hours in service = 3,665
- Total hours of training (volunteer) = 4,100

* Response time is measured from the time of dispatch until the first unit arrives on the scene of the emergency, and can vary based on the distance traveled, the services to surrounding townships and other factors.

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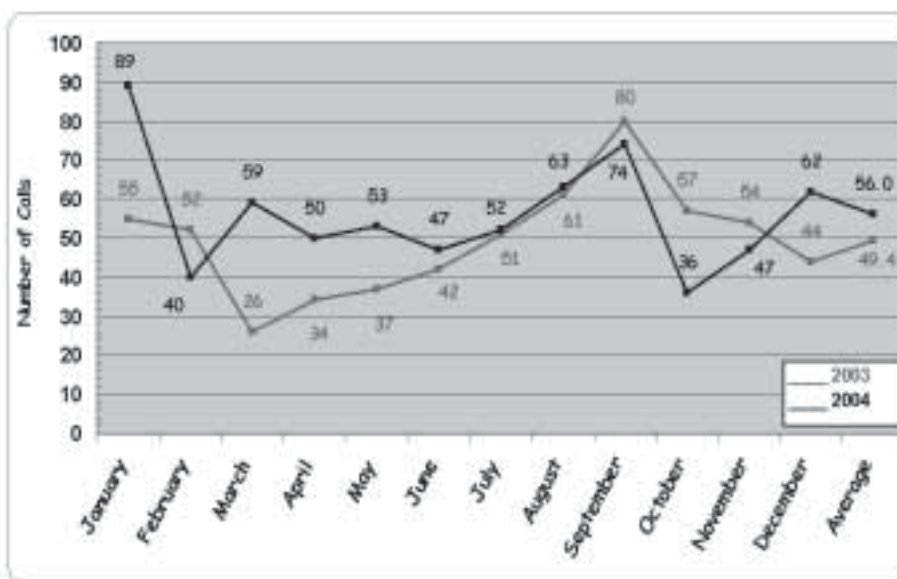
2004 FDMT Calls by Month



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



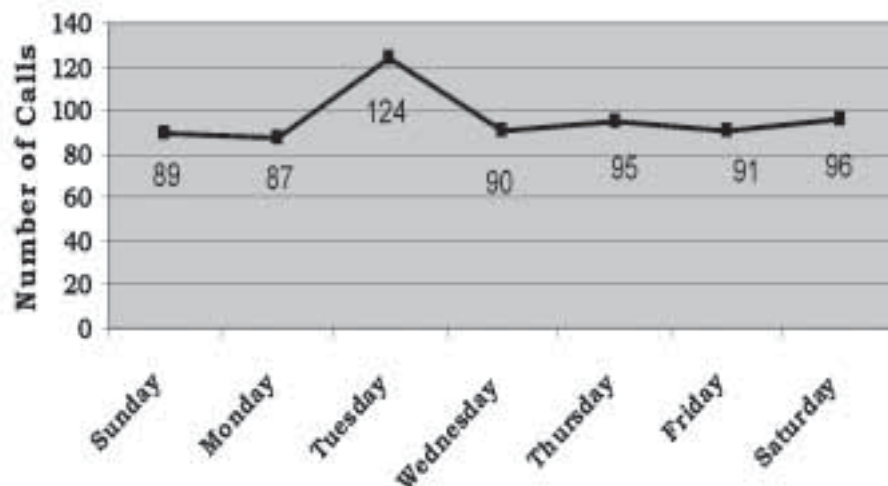
FDMT Calls by Month 2003 vs. 2004



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



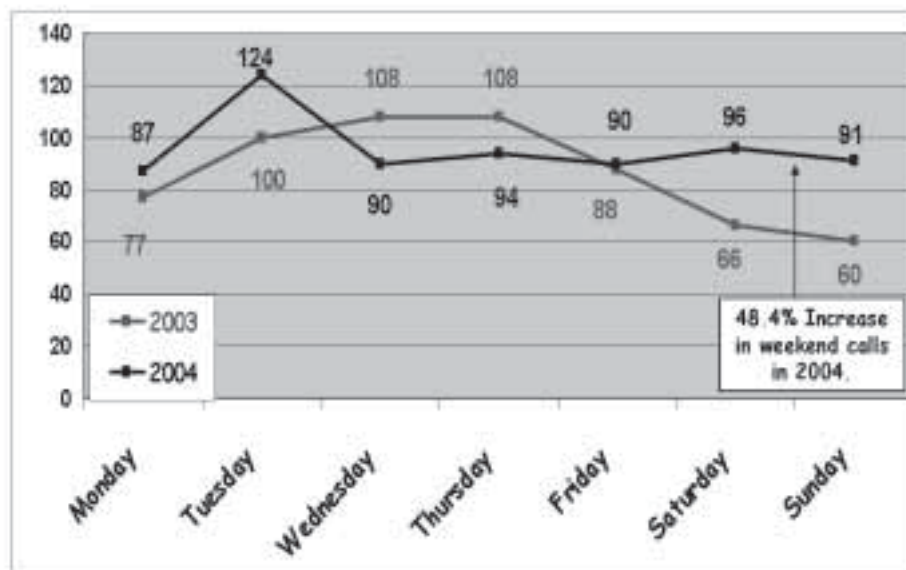
2004 FDMT Calls by Day of the Week



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



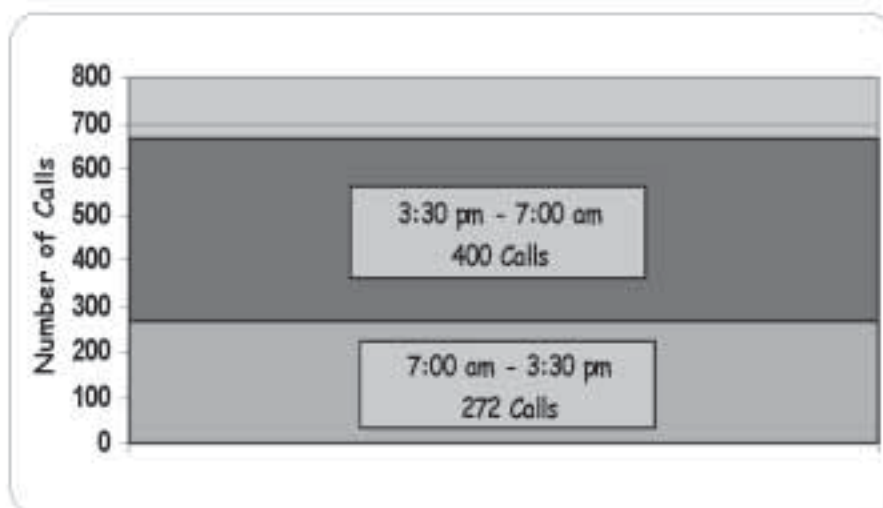
FDMT Calls by Day of the Week 2003 vs 2004



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



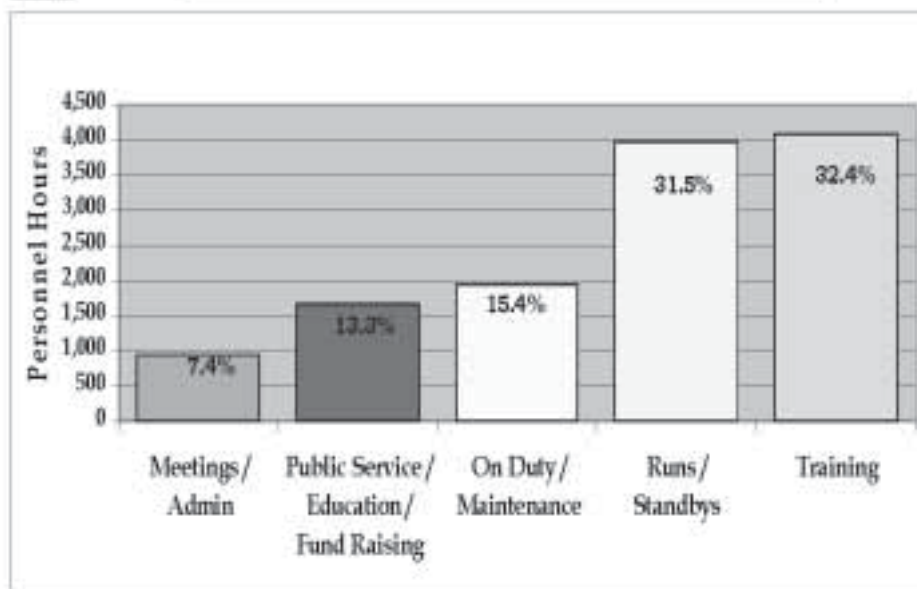
2004 FDMT Calls by Time of Day



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



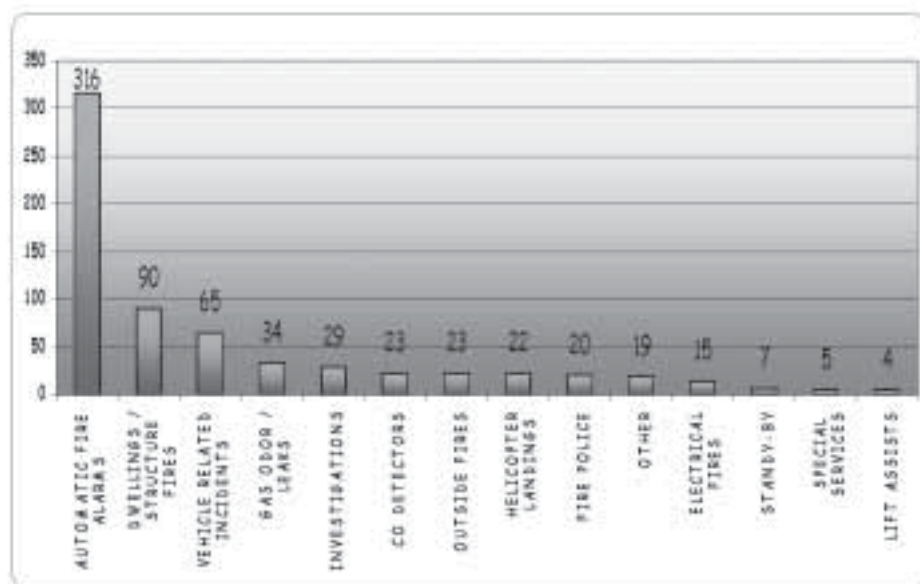
FDMT 2004 Activity Summary



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT 2004 Incident Breakdown



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT Training by Volunteers - 2004

As noted, the volunteers of FDMT spent over 4,100 personnel hours in training during the past year. The topics and evolutions included:

Emergency Vehicle Operations	Engine Company Operations	Air Cascade Operations
Aerial Operations & Qualifications	Hoseline Advance Operations	Structural Collapse Operations
Foam Operations	High Angle Rescue Operations	Confined Space Operations
Trench Rescue Operations	Special Operations	Fireground Safety
Hand & Sign Language	Ventilation Operations	Highway Safety Operations
Mutual Aid Training	Live Burn Evolutions	Hazardous Materials Operations
Pump Operations	Communications	Pre-plan training
Waterflow Mechanics	Rope Rescue	Ropes & Knots
Deck Gun Operations	Aircraft Safety & Rescue	Commercial Roof Operations
Gas Detector Operations	Rescue & Stabilization	Car Fires
Rescue Tools	Tanker Operations	Ladder & Hose Training
Forcible Entry	SCBA Certifications	Alarm Procedures
Computer & Data Entry	Rescue Task Force Operations	CPR Recertification & Training

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FDMT OPERATIONAL GOALS FOR 2005

It is our goal to continue operating the Township's Fire Department a class one organization.

To achieve this, it is our objective to meet the minimum standards of NFPA 1720, as well as to exemplify other professional guidelines. We have made great strides in improving our Department; but we are not content to rest on the complacency of the present. We must consistently plan for improving the future of our operations and the competencies of our personnel.

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT OPERATIONAL GOALS FOR 2005

TRAINING DIVISION

Training is the fundamental foundation of the FDMT.

Our goal for 2005 is to continue utilizing the fire training academies of both Montgomery and Bucks counties as well the many qualified instructors that we have relied upon to date.

We will improve on the basics of engine, truck and rescue company operations, as well as the special operations training we initiated last year.

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FDMT OPERATIONAL GOALS FOR 2005

PREPLAN DIVISION

This division will continue working with the Department of Fire Services to gather specific information, and create an up-to-date database and mapping system targeting critical and valuable occupancies across Montgomery Township.

We will also update the maps for the surrounding Mutual Aid Fire Departments that complement our efforts as warranted.

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT OPERATIONAL GOALS FOR 2005

MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

We continue to attract new volunteers from the residents and employees working with the various employers in Montgomery Township. Our Firefighter Fantasy Camp on April 23, 2005 will be a inaugural component of the on-going recruitment effort.

We will establish a mentoring system where a new member will be paired with a veteran firefighter to learn the fundamentals of operations on a one-on-one basis.

We will also be updating the personnel and training files of all members, so as to track their progress and performance.

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FDMT OPERATIONAL GOALS FOR 2005

FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION

Fire prevention is a year-round event, and FDMT's commitment mirrors the importance of fire safety in our community.

Home fire safety and evacuation drills remain a major focus, as well as fire extinguisher and safety in the work place. We continue reaching out to the schools and institutions in the Township to put on demonstrations, lectures and contests.

As we are entrusted as first responders in the times of emergencies, we must continue with the same dedication in sharing the knowledge and implementation of fire safety efforts in Montgomery Township.

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT OPERATIONAL GOALS FOR 2005

DIVISION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

This Division will be expanded to ensure that communications between the Montgomery Township, the public and the FDMT is enhanced.

By using e-mail, voice mail, or face to face communication, we will develop a standardized system so that no contact goes unanswered. This division will work closely with the Divisions of Membership, Fire Prevention and the Officers to keep the information flowing. Any press related issues will continue to be handled by the Chief and/or President, or the DFS if required.

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT OPERATIONAL GOALS FOR 2005

DIVISION OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS (SOC)

After last year's aggressive Special Operations training schedule, this Division will advance to the next steps in expanding our capabilities.

The tool cache for Rescue 18, as well as the Collapse Unit truck, will be enhanced, and our members will continue training on the appropriate use of all SOC tools. The Collapse Unit will be placed in service in 2005.

This Division will also set up its own database on training issues as well as special interests by the members.

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT GOALS FOR 2005

1. Review and amend the Fire Service Agreement accordingly
2. Revamp and expand the Membership Division and recruit more volunteers from within the community.
3. Continue to update Standard Operating Guideline's (SOG's)
4. Distribute to each Battalion Station binders of FDMT's Directives, SOG's, Bylaws, and copies of the Fire Services Agreement
5. Continue with comprehensive training – Firefighting Level I & II Certifications and Fire Operations Level I Certification

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FDMT CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT GOALS FOR 2005

6. Place Collapse Unit in service by June 1, 2005
7. Finalize the design and building of Battalion Station 2
8. Fine tune the points system – runs, duty crews, details, etc.
9. Research and develop a pay-per-call system for 2006
10. Finalize specifications for the purchase of a new Fire Chief's Vehicle and Squad Apparatus

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



EXECUTIVE OFFICERS FIRE DEPARTMENT OF MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP

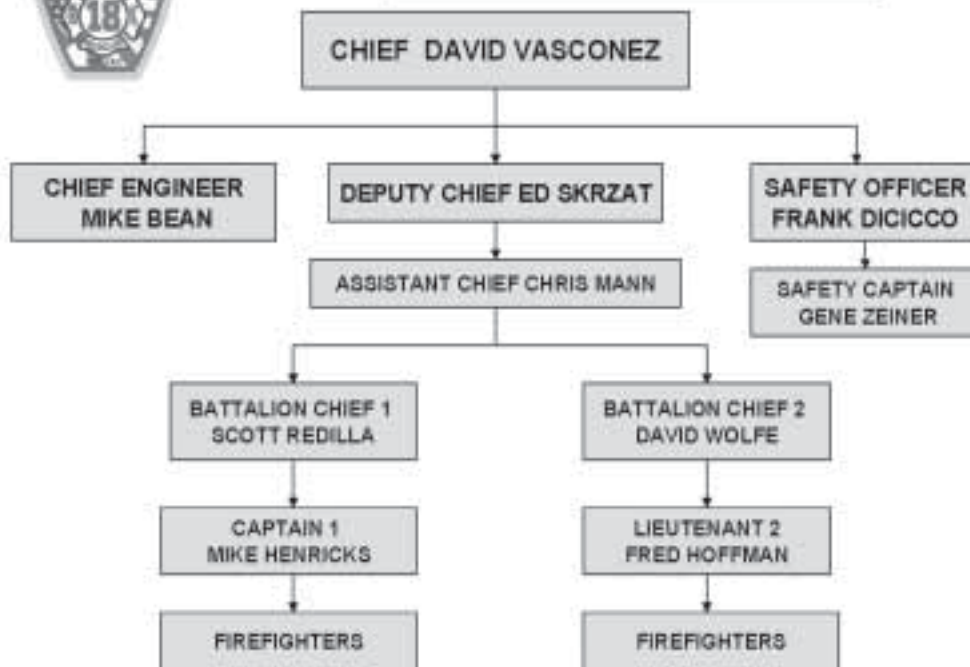
President – Bernd G. Heinze
Vice President – Fred Hoffman
Treasurer – Gene Zeiner
Recording Secretary – Kara Dean
Financial Secretary – Melanie Vasconez
Head Trustee – Francis DiCicco

Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA



FIRE DEPARTMENT OF MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP

2005 VOLUNTEER LINE OFFICERS



Thank You

The men and women of the Fire Department of Montgomery Township are privileged to have been granted the opportunity to work in concert with all other Township Agencies, Departments, Staff and Committees in serving our neighbors and friends within the community, and to be entrusted with the charge of protecting the lives and property of residents, visitors and businesses from fire, rescue and related emergencies.

As Montgomery Township residents and volunteers we are proud to continue the service to our community, and enhancing the over 900 years of combined firefighting, fire police and executive experience represented within our ranks.



Proudly Serving Montgomery Township, PA

APPENDIX G:

References

Faugh, Robert, “Why We Are the Way We Are,” FASNY Training and Education Committee, 2004

FASNY Recruitment and Retention Committee, “Report of the Recruitment and Retention Committee,” 132nd Annual Convention Committee Reports, FASNY, Melville, New York, 2004

Jones, Dennis, “Pride of Purpose,” Sunrise Beach, MO, Fire Protection District, 2004

NY Office of Fire Prevention and Control, “Pay Me Now or Pay Me Later,” presentation at the 132nd Annual Conference of the FASNY, Melville, New York, August 19, 2004

VFIS, Recruitment and Retention, Training Course, York, PA, 2000

Weiss, “Attitudes Toward the Fire Service,” presentation at the 132nd Annual Conference of the FASNY, Melville, New York, August 19, 2004

Wilson, Franklin Woodrow II, Recruitment & Retention Of The Volunteer: The Missing Piece Of The Fire Service, Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue, available on the NVFC website, August 15, 2002

APPENDIX H:

Examples of Modular Training Programs

Date Received	Texas Commission on Fire Protection Fire Service Standards & Certification Division P. O. Box 2286, Austin, Texas 78768-2286 (512) 239-4911 Fax No. (512) 239-4918	Date Approved
Entered By		Processed By
Phase I Training Notification Fire Fighter I		

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT clearly)

Personnel Information:				
Social Security No.	Last Name	Suffix	First Name	Middle Name or Initial
Home Address of Applicant	City	State	Zip Code	
		TX		
Daytime Phone Number of Applicant	E-Mail Address (if available)			

Fire Department/Training Academy Information:		This section to be completed by the Training Facility	
FDID	Fire Department Name	Department Phone Number (Non-Emergency)	
Fire Department Mailing Address	City	State	Zip Code
		TX	

Course Approval Number
Course Approval number issued by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection:

Disclosure of your social security number is required. Your social security number is being solicited pursuant to Texas Family Code Section 231.302 for use by the State Title IV-D agency to assist in the administration of laws relating to child support enforcement under Parts A and D of Title IV of the Federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sections 601-617 and 651-669). It is the policy of this agency that all applicants will receive an equal opportunity without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, national origin, or physical/mental disability unless the individual does not meet the standards set by the commission as stated in the Standards Manual for Fire Protection Personnel, "Standards for Certification," §421.3. By my signature below, I attest I have read and agree that the statements on this form and any attachments to this form are true and correct. I understand any misstatements or omissions of material facts may constitute grounds for administrative proceedings by the T.C.F.P.

Applicant's Signature	Date

NOTE: By signing below, I (the Training Coordinator) understand that I am responsible for insuring that all training documented on the reverse side of this form was conducted in accordance with the rules and requirements set forth by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

Name of Training Coordinator (Please Print)	Signature of Training Coordinator	Date Signed

Please complete the reverse side of this form.

PHASE ONE – STRUCTURE FIRE SUPPRESSION – Fire Fighter I			
SECTION	SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED HOURS	HOURS COMPLETED
Sec. 115	Fire Science	16	
Sec. 120	Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus	32	
Sec. 121	Personal Protective Equipment	4	
Sec. 122	Fire Fighter Safety and Orientation	24	
	Total Hrs Needed For Phase I	76	

TCFP-052 P. 2
11/26/2002

Rev. Code 70

Date Received	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Texas Commission on Fire Protection</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Fire Service Standards & Certification Division P. O. Box 2286, Austin, Texas 78768-2286 (512) 239-4911 Fax No. (512) 239-4918</p>	Date Approved
Entered By		Processed By
Phase II Training Notification Fire Fighter I		

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT clearly)

Personnel Information:				
Social Security No.	Last Name	Suffix	First Name	Middle Name or Initial
Home Address of Applicant		City	State	Zip Code
			TX	
Daytime Phone Number of Applicant		E-Mail Address (if available)		

Fire Department/Training Academy Information:		This section to be completed by the Training Facility	
FDID	Fire Department Name	Department Phone Number (Non-Emergency)	
Fire Department Mailing Address		City	State
			TX

Course Approval Number
Course Approval number issued by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection:

Disclosure of your social security number is required. Your social security number is being solicited pursuant to Texas Family Code Section 231.302 for use by the State Title IV-D agency to assist in the administration of laws relating to child support enforcement under Parts A and D of Title IV of the Federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sections 601-617 and 651-659). It is the policy of this agency that all applicants will receive an equal opportunity without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, national origin, or physical/mental disability unless the individual does not meet the standards set by the commission as stated in the Standards Manual for Fire Protection Personnel, "Standards for Certification," §421.3. By my signature below, I attest I have read and agree that the statements on this form and any attachments to this form are true and correct. I understand any misstatements or omissions of material facts may constitute grounds for administrative proceedings by the T.C.F.P.

Applicant's Signature	Date

NOTE: By signing below, I (the Training Coordinator) understand that I am responsible for insuring that all training documented on the reverse side of this form was conducted in accordance with the rules and requirements set forth by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

Name of Training Coordinator (Please Print)	Signature of Training Coordinator	Date Signed

Please complete the reverse side of this form.

TCFP-053 P. 1
11/26/2002

Rev. Code 70

PHASE TWO – STRUCTURE FIRE SUPPRESSION – Fire Fighter I			
SECTION	SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED HOURS	HOURS COMPLETED
Sec. 103	Portable Fire Extinguishers	8	
Sec. 105	Fire Service Ground Ladders	32	
Sec. 106	Fire Service Hose	24	
Sec. 108	Fire Service Overhaul	4	
Sec. 109	Fire Streams	8	
Sec. 113	Water Supplies	8	
	Total Hrs Needed For Phase II	84	

TCFP-053 P. 2
11/26/2002

Rev. Code 70

Date Received	<h1 style="text-align: center;">Texas Commission on Fire Protection</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">Fire Service Standards & Certification Division P. O. Box 2286, Austin, Texas 78768-2286 (512) 239-4911 Fax No. (512) 239-4918</p>	Date Approved
Entered By		Processed By
Phase III Training Notification		

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT clearly)

Personnel Information:				
Social Security No.	Last Name	Suffix	First Name	Middle Name or Initial
Home Address of Applicant		City	State	Zip Code
			TX	
Daytime Phone Number of Applicant		E-Mail Address (if available)		

Fire Department/Training Academy Information:		This section to be completed by the Training Facility	
FDID	Fire Department Name	Department Phone Number (Non-Emergency)	
Fire Department Mailing Address		City	State
			TX

Course Approval Number
Course Approval number issued by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection:

Disclosure of your social security number is required. Your social security number is being solicited pursuant to Texas Family Code Section 231.302 for use by the State Title IV-D agency to assist in the administration of laws relating to child support enforcement under Parts A and D of Title IV of the Federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sections 601-617 and 651-669). It is the policy of this agency that all applicants will receive an equal opportunity without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, national origin, or physical/mental disability unless the individual does not meet the standards set by the commission as stated in the Standards Manual for Fire Protection Personnel, "Standards for Certification", §421.3. By my signature below, I attest I have read and agree that the statements on this form and any attachments to this form are true and correct. I understand any misstatements or omissions of material facts may constitute grounds for administrative proceedings by the T.C.F.P.

Applicant's Signature	Date

NOTE: By signing below, I (the Training Coordinator) understand that I am responsible for insuring that all training documented on the reverse side of this form was conducted in accordance with the rules and requirements set forth by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

Name of Training Coordinator (Please Print)	Signature of Training Coordinator	Date Signed

Please complete the reverse side of this form.

TCFP-054 P. 1
11/26/2002

Rev. Code 70

PHASE THREE – STRUCTURE FIRE SUPPRESSION – Fire Fighter I			
SECTION	SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED HOURS	HOURS COMPLETED
Sec. 104	Ropes, Knots, Hitches	16	
Sec. 107	Fire Service Salvage	8	
Sec. 110	Ventilation	20	
Sec. 119	Wildland Fire Suppression	8	
Sec. 123	Building Construction	4	
Sec. 124	Live Fire Training	24	
	Total Hrs Needed For Phase III	80	

TCFP-054 P. 1
11/26/2002

Rev. Code 70

Date Received	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Texas Commission on Fire Protection</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Fire Service Standards & Certification Division P. O. Box 2286, Austin, Texas 78768-2286 (512) 239-4911 Fax No. (512) 239-4918</p>	Date Approved
Entered By		Processed By
Phase IV Training Notification Fire Fighter I		

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT clearly)

Personnel Information:				
Social Security No.	Last Name	Suffix	First Name	Middle Name or Initial
Home Address of Applicant		City	State	Zip Code
			TX	
Daytime Phone Number of Applicant		E-Mail Address (if available)		

Fire Department/Training Academy Information:		This section to be completed by the Training Facility	
FDID	Fire Department Name	Department Phone Number (Non-Emergency)	
Fire Department Mailing Address		City	State
			TX

Course Approval Number
Course Approval number issued by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection:

Disclosure of your social security number is required. Your social security number is being solicited pursuant to Texas Family Code Section 231.302 for use by the State Title IV-D agency to assist in the administration of laws relating to child support enforcement under Parts A and D of Title IV of the Federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sections 601-617 and 651-669). It is the policy of this agency that all applicants will receive an equal opportunity without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, national origin, or physical/mental disability unless the individual does not meet the standards set by the commission as stated in the Standards Manual for Fire Protection Personnel, "Standards for Certification", §421.3. By my signature below, I attest I have read and agree that the statements on this form and any attachments to this form are true and correct. I understand any misstatements or omissions of material facts may constitute grounds for administrative proceedings by the T.C.F.P.

Applicant's Signature	Date

NOTE: By signing below, I (the Training Coordinator) understand that I am responsible for insuring that all training documented on the reverse side of this form was conducted in accordance with the rules and requirements set forth by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

Name of Training Coordinator (Please Print)	Signature of Training Coordinator	Date Signed

Please complete the reverse side of this form.

TCFP-055 P. 1
11/26/2002

Rev. Code 79

PHASE FOUR – STRUCTURE FIRE SUPPRESSION - Fire Fighter I			
.SECTION	SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED HOURS	HOURS COMPLETED
Sec. 101	Fire Commission Rules and Regulations*	1*	
Sec. 102	Forcible Entry	12	
Sec. 111	Rescue	16	
Sec. 112	Inspections	12	
Sec. 114	Fire Protection Systems	8	
Sec. 116	Hazardous Materials Awareness**	12	
Sec. 117	Emergency Service Communications	4	
Sec. 118	Public Relations & Fire Safety Education	4	
Sec. 125	Fire Cause Determination	4	
	Total Hrs Needed For Phase IV	72	

* This subject area is optional and will not be tested. However, review of this subject is recommended for the benefit of fire fighter trainees.

** A minimum of 8 hours of Hazardous Materials training is required to allow an individual to take the state Basic Fire Suppression Fire Fighter I Examination.

NOTE: ALL FIRE FIGHTER I training and testing must be completed prior to beginning Phase Five (Fire Fighter II training).

TCFP-055 P. 2
11/26/2002

Rev. Code 70

Date Received	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Texas Commission on Fire Protection</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Fire Service Standards & Certification Division P. O. Box 2286, Austin, Texas 78768-2286 (512) 239-4911 Fax No. (512) 239-4918</p>	Date Approved
Entered By		Processed By
Phase V Training Notification Fire Fighter II		

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT clearly)

Personnel Information:				
Social Security No.	Last Name	Suffix	First Name	Middle Name or Initial
Home Address of Applicant		City	State	Zip Code
			TX	
Daytime Phone Number of Applicant		E-Mail Address (if available)		

Fire Department/Training Academy Information:		This section to be completed by the Training Facility	
FDID	Fire Department Name	Department Phone Number (Non-Emergency)	
Fire Department Mailing Address		City	State
			TX

Course Approval Number
Course Approval number issued by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection:

Disclosure of your social security number is required. Your social security number is being solicited pursuant to Texas Family Code Section 231.302 for use by the State Title IV-D agency to assist in the administration of laws relating to child support enforcement under Parts A and D of Title IV of the Federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sections 601-617 and 651-669). It is the policy of this agency that all applicants will receive an equal opportunity without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, national origin, or physical/mental disability unless the individual does not meet the standards set by the commission as stated in the Standards Manual for Fire Protection Personnel, "Standards for Certification," §421.3. By my signature below, I attest I have read and agree that the statements on this form and any attachments to this form are true and correct. I understand any misstatements or omissions of material facts may constitute grounds for administrative proceedings by the T.C.F.P.

Applicant's Signature	Date

NOTE: By signing below, I (the Training Coordinator) understand that I am responsible for insuring that all training documented on the reverse side of this form was conducted in accordance with the rules and requirements set forth by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

Name of Training Coordinator (Please Print)	Signature of Training Coordinator	Date Signed

Please complete the reverse side of this form.

TCFP-056 P. 1
11/28/2002

Rev. Code 79

PHASE V – STRUCTURE FIRE SUPPRESSION – Fire Fighter II			
SECTION	SUBJECT	RECOMMENDED HOURS	HOURS COMPLETED
Sec. 156	Fire Service Hose	8	
Sec. 158	Fire Service Overhaul	2	
Sec. 159	Fire Streams	26	
Sec. 160	Ventilation	4	
Sec. 161	Rescue	24	
Sec. 162	Inspections	4	
Sec. 163	Water Supplies	8	
Sec. 164	Fire Protection Systems	8	
Sec. 166*	Hazardous Materials Operations *	16	
Sec. 173	Building Construction	4	
Sec. 174	Live Fire Training	16	
Sec. 175	Fire Cause Determination	4	
Sec. 176	Incident Management Systems	8	
Sec. 177	Reports and Records	2	
Sec. 178	Pre-Incident Planning	8	
Sec. 179	Fire Apparatus Familiarization	6	
Sec. 180	Fire Apparatus Pump Theory	8	
	Total Hrs Needed For Phase V	156	

* A minimum of 16 hours of Hazardous Materials Operations training is required to allow an individual to take the state Basic Fire Suppression Fire Fighter II Examination.

State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas

4450 Frontier Trail
Phone: (800) 580-7336

Austin, Texas 78745
Fax: (512) 453-1876

SFFMA OFFICE USE ONLY

Certified Date:

➔ (APPLICATION MUST BE COMPLETE) ➔

INTRODUCTORY FIRE FIGHTING CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Name _____ Date: _____

Social Security _____ - - - Male ☐ Female ☐ Age _____

Date of Birth _____ Driver's License # _____ State _____

Home Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Personal E-Mail Address _____

Fire Department Name _____

Fire Department Address _____

Fire Department Phone _____ Dept. E-Mail Address _____

Current SFFMA Department Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

Current SFFMA Individual Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

FIRE DEPARTMENT EXPERIENCE

Department Name _____ Dates of Enrollment in Department _____ Rank _____

Record of Training

*Minimum Hours Required

**Minimum Training Hours Received

Section #	Subject	*Hours	Objectives	**Hours
1	Fire Department Organization	2	1-1.1, 1-1.2, 1-1.3	
2	Forcible Entry	2	2-1.1, 2-1.2	
3	Ladder Practices	6	3-1.1, 3-1.6, 3-1.7, 3-1.8 (a-c), 3-1.9	
4	Fire Hose Practices	12	4-1.1, 4-1.2, 4-1.3, 4-1.4, 4-1.5, 4-1.6, 4-1.7, 4-1.8, 4-1.9, 4-1.10, 4-1.11, 4-1.13	
6	Fire Streams	4	6-1.1, 6-1.2, 6-1.3, 6-1.4	
8	Ventilation Practices	7	8-1.1, 8-1.2, 8-1.3, 8-1.4, 8-1.5, 8-1.7	
9	Rescue Operations	8	9-1.1, 9-1.2, 9-1.4, 9-1.6	
10	First Aid	4	10-1.1, 10-1.2, 10-1.3, 10-1.4, 10-1.5, 10-1.6, 10-1.7, 10-1.10, 10-1.12, 10-1.13, 10-1.14, 10-1.15, 10-1.19, 10-1.20, 10-3.11, 10-3.16	
15	Fire Behavior (Fire Science)	8	15-1.1, 15-1.2, 15-1.3, 15-1.4, 15-1.5, 15-1.6, 15-1.7, 15-1.8, 15-1.9, 15-1.10, 15-1.11	
23	Safety & Protective Clothing	4	23-1.6, 23-1.8, 23-1.9, 23-1.10, 23-1.11, 23-1.12	
25	Ground Cover	3	25-1.1 (a-c), 25-1.2	
27	SCBA	10	27-1.1, 27-1.2, 27-1.3, 27-1.4, 27-1.5, 27-1.6	
	Required Hours	70	Hours Received	

Revised 01/05

PLEASE ENCLOSE \$10.00 PROCESSING FEE

**MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR
INTRODUCTORY FIRE FIGHTING CERTIFICATE**

This level of certification was established to meet the standards under NFPA 1403, 92 Edition, for suggested training needed prior to "Live Fire Training".

- A. Training, meeting all requirements of this program, from January 1, 1975 to the present, will be accepted towards certification with the proper verification. Training hours for this accreditation will be accepted only for the year in which a department filed a yearly progress report.
- B. All training will be approved by the Fire Chief and the Certifying Coordinator, who has been certified by the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association, Austin office.
- C. Certification applications and progress report forms will be furnished to all departments upon request. Forms shall be returned to the Austin SFFMA office.
- D. In order for a department's training program to be valid, and for the State Association office to accept the yearly progress report, the participating department **MUST** be a current member of the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas.
- E. Applicant **MUST** be a member in good standing in a regularly organized fire department, and **MUST** have and maintain a current individual membership status in the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas.
- F. Upon completion of the required hours for Introductory Fire Fighting, the completed application for Introductory Fire Fighting must be signed by the Certification Coordinator and Fire Chief, and sent to the Austin SFFMA office accompanied by the \$10.00 application processing fee. The Austin office will issue the appropriate certificate. A record of the Introductory Fire Fighting Certification will be maintained in the Austin SFFMA office.

The objectives for "Introductory Fire Fighting" are considered the minimum training that must be completed prior to "Introductory Fire Fighting" Certification. All objectives are included and transferable toward the Basic Level of certification.

ATTESTMENT: I attest that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I further attest that the applicant has achieved all objectives required for Introductory certification and has completed the required 70 hours.

Attested by: _____ Signature of Certifying Coordinator	_____ Print Name of Certifying Coordinator
_____ Signature of Fire Chief	_____ Print Name of Fire Chief
_____ Signature of Applicant	_____ Print Name of Applicant

PLEASE ENCLOSE \$10.00 PROCESSING FEE

PLEASE ALLOW 30-60 DAYS FOR PROCESSING.

Revised 08/01

State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas

4450 Frontier Trail
Phone: (800) 580-7336

♦ Austin, Texas 78745
Fax: (512) 453-1876

SFFMA OFFICE USE ONLY

Certified Date:

➔ (APPLICATION MUST BE COMPLETE) ➔

BASIC FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Name _____ Date: _____

Social Security _____ Male ☐ Female ☐ Age _____

Date of Birth _____ Driver's License # _____ State _____

Home Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Personal E-Mail Address _____

Fire Department Name _____

Fire Department Address _____

Fire Department Phone _____ Dept. E-Mail Address _____

Current SFFMA Department Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

Current SFFMA Individual Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

ATTESTMENT: I attest that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I further attest that the applicant has achieved all objectives required for Basic certification and has met a minimum of the required hours.

Date: _____

Attested by: _____

Signature of Certification Coordinator

Print Name of Certification Coordinator

Signature of Fire Chief

Print Name of Fire Chief

Signature of Applicant

Print Name of Applicant

PAGE 2 MUST BE COMPLETED IN FULL

PLEASE ENCLOSE \$10.00 PROCESSING FEE

PLEASE ALLOW 30-60 DAYS FOR PROCESSING.

Revised 01/05

FIRE FIGHTER NAME: _____

SSN: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

NOTE:
PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT
NAMES AND SOCIAL
SECURITY NUMBERS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	TOTAL TRAINING HOURS
FIRE DEPT. ORGANIZATION																																
FORCIBLE ENTRY																																
LOADING PRACTICES																																
HOSE PRACTICES																																
SALVAGE & OVERHAUL																																
FIRE STREAMS																																
APPARATUS PRACTICES																																
VENTILATION PRACTICES																																
RESCUE OPERATIONS																																
FIRST AID																																
INSPECTION PRACTICES																																
WATER SUPPLIES																																
FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM																																
TRANSPORTATION EMER.																																
FIRE BEHAVIOR																																
ALARM/COMMUNICATION																																
PUBLIC RELATIONS																																
RECORDS & REPORTS																																
EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPS.																																
EMERGENCY INCIDENT																																
FIRE CAUSE & ORIGIN																																
LIVE FIRE TRAINING																																
FF SAFETY/PROTECTIVE																																
PUMP OPS/HYDRAULICS																																
GROUND COVER																																
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS																																
SCBA																																
ROPS																																
PORTABLE EXTINGUISHERS																																
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION																																
PUBLIC FIRE EDUCATION																																

REQUIRED HOURS

BASIC - 167	2	2	12	12	4	2	2	2	2	8	4	2	2	6	4	4	8	8	3	8	12	4	2									
INTERMEDIATE - 191	16	4	8	10	6	8	8	18	12	8	4	6	6	2	2	20	8	8	8	8	12	6	2									
ADVANCED - 187	4	12	10	4	8	8	16	14	16	12	6	6	6	6	2	2	12	8		8	6	6	4	12	3							

CURRENT YEAR HOURS

BASIC																																
INTERMEDIATE																																
ADVANCED																																

ALL PREVIOUS YEARS HOURS

BASIC																																
INTERMEDIATE																																
ADVANCED																																

ALL YEARS HOURS

BASIC																																
INTERMEDIATE																																
ADVANCED																																

HOURS NEEDED FOR LEVEL

BASIC																																
INTERMEDIATE																																
ADVANCED																																

State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas

4450 Frontier Trail
Phone: (800) 580-7336

♦ Austin, Texas 78745
Fax: (512) 453-1876

SFFMA OFFICE USE ONLY

Certified Date:

➔ (APPLICATION MUST BE COMPLETE) ➔

INTERMEDIATE FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Name _____ Date: _____

Social Security _____ Male ☐ Female ☐ Age _____

Date of Birth _____ Driver's License # _____ State _____

Home Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Personal E-Mail Address _____

Fire Department Name _____

Fire Department Address _____

Fire Department Phone _____ Dept. E-Mail Address _____

Current SFFMA Department Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

Current SFFMA Individual Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

**NOTICE: ATTACH A COPY OF
BASIC CERTIFICATE**

ATTESTMENT: I attest that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I further attest that the applicant has achieved all objectives required for Intermediate certification and has met a minimum of the required hours.

Date: _____

Attested by: _____
Signature of Certification Coordinator

Print Name of Certification Coordinator

Signature of Fire Chief

Print Name of Fire Chief

Signature of Applicant

Print Name of Applicant

PAGE 2 MUST BE COMPLETED IN FULL

PLEASE ENCLOSE \$20.00 PROCESSING FEE

PLEASE ALLOW 30-60 DAYS FOR PROCESSING.

Revised 01/05

FIRE FIGHTER NAME: _____ **SSN:** _____ **DATE OF BIRTH:** _____

NOTE:
PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT
NAMES AND SOCIAL
SECURITY NUMBERS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	TOTAL TRAINING HOURS
PURSE DEPT. ORGANIZATION																															
FORCIBLE ENTRY																															
LADDER PRACTICES																															
HOSE PRACTICES																															
SALVAGE & OVERHAUL																															
FIRE STREAMS																															
APPARATUS PRACTICES																															
VENTILATION PRACTICES																															
RESCUE OPERATIONS																															
FIRST AID																															
INSPECTION PRACTICES																															
WATER SUPPLIES																															
FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM																															
TRANSFORMATION EXERC.																															
FIRE BEHAVIOR																															
ALARMS/COMMUNICATION																															
PUBLIC RELATIONS																															
RECORDS & REPORTS																															
EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPS																															
EMERGENCY MGMT.																															
FIRE CAUSE & ORIGIN																															
LIVE FIRE TRAINING																															
FF SAFETY/PROTECTIVE																															
PUMP OPS/HYDRAULICS																															
GROUND COVER																															
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS																															
SCBA																															
SCPCS																															
PORTABLE EXTINGUISHERS																															
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION																															
PUBLIC FIRE EDUCATION																															

REQUIRED HOURS

BASIC - 167	2	2	12	12	6	8	8	8	12	12	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
INTERMEDIATE - 191	16	4	8	10	6	8		8	18	12	8	4	6	6	2	2					20	8	8	8	6	6	2	2	2	2	3
ADVANCED - 187		4	12	10	4	8		8	14	16	12	6	8	8	6	2	2		2	4	4	12	8	8	8	6	6	4	12	2	3

CURRENT YEAR HOURS

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

ALL PREVIOUS YEARS HOURS

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

ALL YEARS HOURS

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

HOURS NEEDED FOR LEVEL

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas

4450 Frontier Trail
Phone: (800) 580-7336

Austin, Texas 78745
Fax: (512) 453-1876

SFFMA OFFICE USE ONLY

Certified Date:

➔ (APPLICATION MUST BE COMPLETE) ➔

ADVANCED FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Name _____ Date: _____

Social Security _____ Male ☐ Female ☐ Age _____

Date of Birth _____ Driver's License # _____ State _____

Home Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Personal E-Mail Address _____

Fire Department Name _____

Fire Department Address _____

Fire Department Phone _____ Dept. E-Mail Address _____

Current SFFMA Department Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

Current SFFMA Individual Membership Yes ☐ No ☐

**NOTICE: ATTACH A COPY OF
INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE**

ATTESTMENT: I attest that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I further attest that the applicant has achieved all objectives required for Advanced certification and has met a minimum of the required hours.

Date: _____

Attested by: _____

Signature of Certification Coordinator

Print Name of Certification Coordinator

Signature of Fire Chief

Print Name of Fire Chief

Signature of Applicant

Print Name of Applicant

PAGE 2 MUST BE COMPLETED IN FULL

PLEASE ENCLOSE \$30.00 PROCESSING FEE

PLEASE ALLOW 30-60 DAYS FOR PROCESSING.

Revised 01/05

FIRE FIGHTER NAME:

SSN:

DATE OF BIRTH:

NOTE:
PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT
NAMES AND SOCIAL
SECURITY NUMBERS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	TOTAL TRAINING HOURS
FIRE DEPT. ORGANIZATION	FORCIBLE ENTRY	LADDER PRACTICES	HOSE PRACTICES	SALVAGE & OVERHAUL	FIRE STREAMS	APPARATUS PRACTICES	VENTILATION PRACTICES	RESCUE OPERATIONS	FIRST AID	INSPECTION PRACTICES	WATER SUPPLIES	FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM	TRANSPORTATION EMER.	FIRE BEHAVIOR	ALARM/COMMUNICATION	PUBLIC RELATIONS	RECORDS & REPORTS	EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPS	EMERGENCY MOUNT	FIRE CAUSE & ORIGIN	LIVE FIRE TRAINING	FF SAFETY/PROTECTIVE	PUMP OPS/HYDRAULICS	GROUND COVER	HAZARDOUS MATERIALS	SCBA	ADPES	PORTABLE EXTINGUISHERS	BUILDING CONSTRUCTION	PUBLIC FIRE EDUCATION	

REQUIRED HOURS

BASIC - 167	2	2	12	12	6	6	6	8	12	12	4	2	2	2	8	4	2	2	6	4	4	8	8	8	3	8	12	4	2	2	
INTERMEDIATE - 181	16	4	8	10	6	6	8	18	12	8	4	6	6	2	2						20	8	8	8	6	8	12	6	2	3	
ADVANCED - 187	4	12	10	4	8	8	8	14	16	12	6	8	8	6	2	2			2	4		12	8			8	8	6	4	12	3

CURRENT YEAR HOURS

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

ALL PREVIOUS YEARS HOURS

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

ALL YEARS HOURS

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

HOURS NEEDED FOR LEVEL

BASIC																															
INTERMEDIATE																															
ADVANCED																															

APPENDIX I:

Examples Received from the Field

General Information

Subject: Re: recruitment and retention

As you requested, I have a little information I can share:

1. Junior Firefighters - WE allow 17 year olds to join as juniors -They train with us, meet with us, eat with us - They may not drive vehicles, nor can they enter a fire scene without a fire department member and under no circumstances may they enter a burning structure. At eighteen, they may join as a full member without a probationary period. We currently have two Juniors and two that have joined as full members. One decided not to join.

2. The State of Texas has a retirement program for volunteers that gives a retirement benefit after 15 years of membership. Our City pays this retirement benefit, which I'm sure you are familiar with, through the State Fire Fighters Pension. This has been a good tool to keep firefighters.

3. Our City provides workers compensation and it has been used. We stress this to potential members and it has been a factor in recruiting.

4. We send as many people as possible to Annual Municipal Fire School (13 this year) as possible. We also help with tuition and books for fire training, EMT classes, and the like.

Are we successful? Three years ago when I became chief, we had 21 members and three below thirty years of age. We currently have 44 on the books and 12 below thirty. Of course we have them coming and going, losing interest, moving, etc. but so far we have been gaining more than we are losing. I hope it continues.

Charles Bratcher, Fire Chief

Groesbeck Volunteer Fire Department

Groesbeck, Texas

GREETINGS:

I think one of the most attractive benefits for our volunteer emergency personnel is the insurance coverage we carry.

We are working on an ESD and if that comes through we would like to add a good retirement program. We have also started giving awards every five years. Our recruiting could be improved and I would welcome any suggestions.

We also have a contract (Memorandum of Understanding) which is an agreement that says newly trained emergency personnel will stay in the service at least two years or pay back the cost of training and other expenses on a graduated scale. (See Attachment)

It is a pleasure working with an organization as great as the Leon Springs Volunteer Fire Department.

If you have additional questions, please let me know.

Thank You.

Vern Hine

Board President

LEON SPRINGS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

I, _____, taking into account the significant expenditure of membership funds allocated for my training as a Paramedic, do hereby promise to serve in that capacity for the Leon Springs Volunteer Fire Department. I will serve for a period of not less than two years starting from the date of final Paramedic course completion. I also agree to respond to not less than twenty percent (20%) of emergency calls per month.

If I withdraw by choice from the fire service prior to the term in this memorandum, I agree to reimburse the Leon Springs Volunteer Fire Department the full cost of my training minus 5 percent per month for each month I have served.

I also understand that if at the end of my training as a Paramedic and successful certification, I may qualify for re-imbursement for tuition and other associated costs for my course work from the Leon Springs Volunteer Fire Department.

Print Name

Signature

Date

FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION BILL OF RIGHTS

1. THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED AS A CO-WORKER - AND NOT JUST FREE HELP.
2. THE RIGHT TO SUITABLE ASSIGNMENT.
3. THE RIGHT TO KNOW AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION-POLICY, PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS.
4. THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES.
5. THE RIGHT TO QUALITY TRAINING.
6. THE RIGHT TO SOUND GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION.
7. THE RIGHT TO PROPER WORKING CONDITIONS.
8. THE RIGHT TO A SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT.
9. THE RIGHT TO PROMOTION AND A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES.
10. THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD; TO HAVE A PART IN THE PLANNING.
11. THE RIGHT TO RECOGNITION, THROUGH PROMOTION AND REWARD.
12. THE RIGHT TO DAY-TO-DAY EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION BY THE MANAGEMENT OF THE DISTRICT.

Fire Chief

President of the Board

Firefighters Association President

ORIENTATION PACKAGE EXAMPLE

Welcome... To the Fisher Ferry Volunteer Fire Department.

On behalf of the membership, we would like to thank you for your commitment to serve the community and this Fire Department. It is an admirable one.

“The essential mission of the Fisher Ferry Volunteer Fire Department is the prevention of fire and the protection of life and property by providing organization, trained manpower, equipment, warning, fire education, water and chemical defense, prevention measures, and fire suppression for the people within our Fire District and Service Area. Provide mutual aid if needed to any other organization for the purpose of fire suppression if officially requested. It is also our intention to, as time, equipment, and work force allow, to continuously endeavor to secure a better insurance rating for the area served by this department.”

Whether you have joined as a Fire Fighter, Operational Support Person or Junior Fire Fighter you will play a role in our essential mission. It is our hope that this document will answer some of the questions that you have for us as well as provide you with what the department expects of you.

Don't worry. We aren't going to send you on this journey alone. We have appointed a mentor (a current member) that will help you get to know us, as we get to know you. Your mentor is:

_____	_____
Name	Home Phone

Your mentor may provide you with other means to contact them. Please feel free to ask them ANY question you have. Also, as Executive Board members, we serve at your leisure and welcome any questions that you have for us. Our home phone numbers are listed below.

Again, Welcome and Thank You for Volunteering.

_____	_____
Chief	Assistant Chief

_____	_____
Secretary	Treasurer

_____	_____
Board Member (1)	Board Member (2)

If you have joined to be a Fire Fighter, the Fisher Ferry Volunteer By-Laws, Article II, Paragraph O states:

“O. NEW FIRE FIGHTERS

1. Must have back ground check.
2. Are on probation for 6 months.
3. Must meet county minimum standards within probationary period.
4. Must attend meetings, training, work days etc.
5. Must show up at fire scene for first three months to learn skills associated with fire ground support. These skills are, but are not limited to, proper fire ground conduct, learning pump operations, hose lay, truck to truck pumping, drafting, hose rolling and tank refill.
6. For the next 4 to 6 months will train in all areas of general firefighting, use of entry tools, etc.
7. Will not drive on emergency runs for first year.
8. For training purposes, after their six months probationary period has passed, may be allowed to drive on non emergency runs with a certified driver.”

Once your probationary period has been completed, By-Laws, Article II, Paragraph M states:

“M. FIRE FIGHTERS

1. Must make themselves available for training if at all possible.
2. Must maintain minimum certification as described in county and departmental SOP's.
3. Must respond to fires if possible.
4. Must help maintain equipment and grounds.
5. On the job training of New Fire Fighters”

Specifics about responding, on scene activities and after incident activities are discussed in the Standard Operating Policies and Procedures. Some of these, as well as some of the items listed above will be covered by the Chief or Assistant Chief to ensure we all have a good understanding of our expectations.

If you have joined to be a Operational Support Person, the Fisher Ferry Volunteer By-Laws, Article II, Paragraph N states:

“N. NON-FIRE FIGHTING MEMBERS

1. Assist during fires with refreshment and food as deemed appropriate.
2. Assist with all non-fire fighting activities, inspections, fund raising, maintenance, renovation, etc.
3. Attend meetings.”

Not very specific are they? We didn't think so either. Guidelines concerning support activities are in the process of being drawn up. We appreciate your patience.

If you have joined to be a Junior Fire Fighter, there isn't any By-Law responsibilities placed upon you other than those of general membership. Your parents, along with the Jr. Fire Fighter Coordinators will explain the Guidelines that you must follow.

Have they given you a tour of the station?		
• Training Room/Kitchen/Bathroom		
• Fire Station Calendar		
• Office		
• SCBA Room		
• Apparatus Bay		
• Attic/storage area		
What about Station #2 (Lee Rd.)?		
Did they show you where the mailboxes are?		
• The secretary will assign one to you.		
Did they show you where we keep our Maintenance records?		
• Your mentor should also explain how to use trouble tickets.		
• A Captain will go over the system in more detail later.		
Did they show you the trucks and show you where equipment is stored?		
• Each compartment contains equipment for use on the fire scene.		
• Due to differences in trucks, some things may not be in the same exact location. But most will be in the same general area.		
• This is typical with not only our trucks, but also other county trucks.		
• It is important that this equipment be kept in these locations and if removed, put back in their proper location.		
• Hand tools and flashlights on the trucks are meant for Fire Scene use. If you need a tool or flashlight, you the ones available in the station.		
Did they explain how to borrow equipment from the station?		
• There is a lot of equipment at the station that can be borrowed for personal use (not for personal profit).		
• The Chief or Assistant Chief are the only ones that can authorize the loaning of any equipment.		
• If you want to borrow something off one of the trucks, talk to the Chief or Assistant Chief, something may be able to be worked out.		
• One of these days, the Secretary will start a check out log and we can keep track of all the stuff we have and who has it.		

Did they explain that you can use the Training Room for special events?		
• We ask for these events to be alcohol free.		
• We ask that a member be responsible for ensuring that the rules are followed and that the station has been cleaned up after the event.		
• Schedule your event on the “Fire Station Calendar”, include your name and time of event. Since this is first come first serve, the first one on the calendar gets it. DO NOT erase someone else’s event.		
• We ask that you respect when others are using the station.		
• Make sure your visitors do not park in front of the fire truck bays.		
• Keep children off the trucks without adult supervision.		
• If there is adult supervision, make sure that they (and other adults) do not move any handles, switches, etc. or remove/relocate any equipment.		
• Since there are other hazards in the apparatus bay and attic storage area, we ask that, adult supervision be provided if children are out there.		
• Use any and all equipment as needed in the training room, just return it where you found it after use.		
• For Scout groups or groups that are spending the night, have them bring their own towels and toiletries, including toilet paper.		
• You may also want to turn off the radio speaker to the training room		
• If you need some assistance for your event, let us know. We probably have a few members that would be glad to help.		
Did they explain that you can use the first apparatus bay to work on your vehicle?		
• The apparatus bay closest to the training room (where 309 resides) is the only bay authorized for private vehicle maintenance.		
• Again, this is done on a first come, first serve basis.		
• We have a used oil barrel and some catch pans. Don’t drain fluids down the drain.		
• If you spill any fluids, you can use some oil dry off the trucks.		
• There are also some tools available for everyone’s use. Do not take tools off the truck. And don’t bring station tools home with you unless you have asked to borrow them.		
• Make sure your mentor or another knowledgeable individual shows you how to crank 309 so that you can move it.		

We hope that by now you have met some of us. Just to make sure, we are going to provide you with a checklist so that you know who we are and this will also give you an opportunity to ask us any questions you may have. Your mentor will explain that at times it is difficult to round all these people up at once. Therefore, it is not a requirement that you complete this in the order listed. We ask that you remind your mentor and us, that you haven't gotten this opportunity. Some of the people that you need to know are:

Who we are and what we do...	Our Initials
<p>Ronnie Richardson - Chief</p> <p>As Chief, he is responsible for all of us as well as the department. If anything needs to be reported, this is one of two that we report to.</p> <p>Some of the things the Chief will discuss with you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero-Tolerance Policy • Age Restrictions on Driving Emergency Vehicles • Certified Emergency Vehicle Driver qualifications • Your response, POV (privately owned vehicle) - You may have red and white lights on your vehicle at your expense. No Sirens! • The super secret code to get in the front door • Use of Station Facilities (mentor tour guideline- Any Questions?) • Borrowing Department property/Equipment (mentor tour guideline - Any Questions) <p>In the absence of the chief, this will be done by the Assistant Chief.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Steve Crocker - Assistant Chief</p> <p>As the title implies, he assists the Chief. If the Chief is absent, he oversees the business of the department. If something needs to be reported, and you can't reach the Chief, this is the other person that you report to.</p>	
<p>Some of the things the Assistant Chief will discuss are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition, use and care of Personal Protective Equipment. Your mentor will assist with this also. Fill out the Turnout Sizing Chart on the next page and turn it into the Assistant Chief • Personal Protective equipment will be given to the most qualified (training certified) individuals first. - Additional equipment will then be given to other fire fighters. - Juniors Fire Fighters can then use any surplus. - From time to time, equipment may have to re-distributed to those that are more qualified or to new firefighters. In which case, you could be asked to return equipment that you have in your possession. We will do everything in our power to keep this from happening but we want you to be aware that it can happen. • Members are responsible for all equipment issued to them, and when their membership is terminated shall return all department property. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Who we are and what we do...	Our Initials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue you a Department T-shirt. • The department supplies you with one shirt. If you want an additional shirt, you may purchase one. If you tear up or lose the one the department gives you, you may purchase a replacement. • Official Department Pocket T-shirt, Long-sleeve T-shirt, or sweat shirt can be ordered (price list not yet available), as requested. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications equipment (radio and pager) and its proper uses. • Radios are for Fire Department Business Only. • If you encounter an accident and using your radio can expedite assistance, use it. Other wise, call dispatch at 631-8800, or 911 and report it. • If Fire tones go out, unless you are going for a truck (certified driver) stay off the radio. Go to the incident or go to the station. Dispatch keeps track of apparatus, not personnel. • If you are first on scene report to Dispatch what you have. Protocol is “your number, Dispatch, state what you have found (or didn’t find)” • If you have a problem with your pager, go to Ans-All (Doc’s) and ask Chris to fix it. We can’t fix pagers. • Incident Command System • Discipline policy of the department 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Steve Johnson - Treasurer He keeps up with our money. Most importantly, he makes sure the bills are paid and we have water, electricity and heat at the station and he keeps a record of it.	
Aline Griffin - Secretary Her duties include recording all business and board meeting minutes. Basically, she keeps all the other records of the department.	
Cody McKellar - Board Member (1)	
Shelton Raner - Board Member (2)	
Board members are responsible for assisting with all general and specific departmental business, subject to the general membership.	

Our Executive Board members are elected by the membership for two (2) year terms and each position has specific duties and responsibilities that are addressed in the department By-Laws. A copy of the current By-Laws is enclosed. Please read them and ask your mentor, or one of the board members any questions that you may have.

There are also some other people that you need to meet. Some of them have specific duties and responsibilities as outlined in the Department By-Laws, and others individuals have duties and responsibilities outlined in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs).

Who we are and what we do...	Our Initials
Captain - Mike Russell Captains are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the “Fire” part of the Fire Department.	_____
Training Officer Captain - Aline Griffin As well as the duties of a Captain, the Training Officer is tasked with maintaining an efficient, effective, and safe Fire Fighter Force, through training.	_____
Operation Support Coordinator - Vivian Raner Non-Fire Fighter Support Personnel assist the fire department in day-to-day duties. As well as provide Support at Fire Scenes by providing Fire Fighters with rehabilitation, re-hydration, and first aid services. Support personnel also provide comfort to victims of incidents.	_____
Junior Fire Fighter Coordinators - Bobby and Rae Rufus Jr. FF Coordinators oversee the training and skills of our Jr. FF Corps. They also coordinate with the line officers and board members to instill responsibility in our Jr. Corp by finding responsible tasks for them to accomplish at the station(s).	_____

APPLICATION PROCESS

- 1) Application Completed and Returned
- 2) Personnel Officer Reviews
- 3) Information Complete
- 4) Request Police Background Check
 - a) Review / Evaluate Report
- 5) Contact References
 - a) Review / Evaluate Comments
- 6) Interview Applicant
 - a) Inform about department commitment
 - i) Recruit Class requirement
 - ii) In-service training requirement
 - b) Inform about cost of orienting a member
 - c) Inform about expectations of the member
 - i) Recruit Class requirement
 - ii) In-service training requirement
 - (1) Expectation to respond to emergency calls at a variety of times and conditions.
 - (2) Probationary Requirement
 - (3) Probationary Evaluation Process
 - d) Inform Board of Directors/ Remove from Probationary Status
 - e) Issue Badge/Uniform Jacket
 - f) Evaluate level of commitment
 - g) Inform about process and timeframe
 - h) Determine Departmental Need
- 7) Prioritize based upon
 - a) Where the applicant lives
 - b) Available during the daytime
 - c) Personal interview
 - d) Make offer to candidate
 - e) Complete physical activity relationship questionnaire
 - f) Complete physical agility evaluation
- 8) Contact Applicant to Schedule Recruit Class start day and time
- 9) Complete Orientation Checklist

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Personal Information

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Spouse / Parent Name _____

OCCUPATION

Employment _____

Employer Address _____

Employer Telephone _____

Immediate Supervisor _____

How long currently employed? _____

Work Shift? _____

REFERENCES:

Name _____

Telephone _____

Name _____

Telephone _____

Name _____

Telephone _____

Do you know any current members of the department? Whom?

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you realize that volunteer fire fighters are expected to respond to emergency calls at a wide variety of hours? ☐ Yes ☐ No

The department is offering you an opportunity to volunteer by signing this application.

Signature

Date Signed

Please provide the following information so that your membership can be processed.

Will you grant the us authority to request a police background check? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Social Security Number

Drivers License Number

INTERVIEW FORM

EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEER CANDIDATE

Date _____ Interview Location _____

Name of Candidate _____

WORK EXPERIENCE

Present Position _____

Past _____

Availability: Daytime _____ Nights _____ Weekends _____

EDUCATION:

High School _____ Jr College or Tech _____ Other _____ Licensed or Certified _____

Beneficial to the organization:

Experience _____

Knowledge _____

Skills _____

Expertise _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL: ☐ Fire/Rescue ☐ EMS ☐ Fire Police ☐ Administrative ☐ Support

☐ Specialist _____

VOLUNTEERED BEFORE

Type of organization _____

Likes _____ Dislikes _____

Why did you leave? _____

What would you like to gain by volunteering with this organization? _____

What brought you to our organization? _____

What part of the work most interests you? _____

Did you consider other organizations? _____

What are your hobbies? _____

Do you prefer to work alone or in a team? _____

Do you feel you can meet the expectations of the organization? _____

Do you have any questions about the interview, membership process, or the organization? _____

CANDIDATE INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT FORM

ASSESSMENT:

DOCUMENTATION:

☐ Driver's License

☐ Proof of Insurance

BACKGROUND CHECKS:

☐ Dept of Motor Vehicle Check

☐ Police Check

☐ Work Verification

☐ Other Organizations

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

☐ *Recommend for Membership*

☐ *Do Not Recommend*

☐ *Schedule for Second Interview after Checking References*

☐ *Research Further*

NEW MEMBER CHECKLIST FOR:

ITEM DATE	COMPLETED	COMPLETED BY:
Application Accurate and Complete		
Added to Member Database		
Application Filed		
Assign Call (Radio) Number		
Issue Accountability Tag (with receipt of Turnouts)		
Training File Folder		
Hanging File Folder Tag		
Mail Slot		
Copy of By-Laws and SOP's		
Copy of Coverage Area Maps		
Update and Post Members Call Out List		

PHYSICIAN'S RELEASE

I _____ to the best of my ability believe that
(Physician's Name Printed)

_____ can perform the following activities for the German Township
(Name of patient printed)

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT.

☐ **Structural Firefighter** - Has the physical and mental capacity to perform 20 minutes of strenuous physical activity while wearing a self-contained breathing apparatus at an emergency incident and has the ability to handle high stress situations and make rational decisions in unsupervised areas.

☐ **Support Personnel Unsupervised** - Can perform activities with some physical limitations only outside hazardous areas at an emergency incident. Able to follow written and verbal directions with no supervision required.

☐ **Support Personnel Supervised** - Can perform activities outside hazardous areas at an emergency incident. Able to follow written and verbal directions with supervision required.

☐ Not recommended to perform any activities on an emergency incident.

Physician's Signature:

Date:

RECRUIT ORIENTATION

This form is used to assure minimum is acquired before new members are allowed to respond to incidents.

Candidate: _____

Officer: _____

ORANGE COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT #1 RECRUIT ORIENTATION

PASS/FAIL	SUBJECT	HOURS	INITIALS
_____	Safety	4	_____
_____	PPE	6	_____
_____	Fire Behavior	4	_____
_____	Hose	4	_____
_____	Ventilation	4	_____
_____	Ladders	4	_____
_____	IMS	2	_____

_____ has passed/failed the recruit orientation.

Signature: _____
Candidate

Signature: _____
Officer

FIREFIGHTER EVALUATION EXAMPLES

Areas to be Evaluated	Strongly Agree - 4	Agree - 3	Disagree - 2
1. Quality - extent to which a Firefighter's work is accurate, thorough and neat.			
2. Productivity - extent to which a Firefighter produces a significant volume of work efficiently in specified time.			
3. Job Knowledge - extent to which a Firefighter possesses the practical/technical knowledge required on the job.			
4. Reliability - The extent to which a Firefighter can be relied upon regarding task completion and follow up.			
5. Attendance - The extent to which a Firefighter is punctual, observes prescribed work break/meal periods and has an acceptable overall attendance record.			
6. Independence - The extent to which a Firefighter performs work with little or no supervision.			
7. Creativity - extent to which a Firefighter proposes ideas, finds new and better ways of doing things.			
8. Initiative - extent to which a Firefighter seeks out new assignments and assumes additional duties when necessary.			
9. Adherence to Policy - extent to which a Firefighter follows safety and conducts rules, other regulations and adheres to company policies.			
10. Interpersonal Relationships - extent to which Firefighter demonstrates the ability to cooperate, work and communicate with coworkers, supervisors, subordinates and/or outside contacts.			
11. Judgment - extent to which a Firefighter demonstrates proper judgment and decision-making skills.			
12. Leadership - The extent to which a Firefighter demonstrates leadership qualities and values consistent with the mission of the fire department.			
13. Honest - do you trust the Firefighter with your life?			
13. Honest - do you trust the Firefighter with your money?			
14. Dependable - does the Firefighter do what they say they will do?			
15. Training Attitude - do you believe that the Firefighter has the German attitude about training?			
16. Responsible - do you believe that the Firefighter would empty the trash can if it was full?			
17. Appearance - does the Firefighter demonstrate a professional appearance in hygiene and clothing?			

How many times have you done CPR on a real person?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you pumped an Engine on a emergency response?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you used the jaws of life to remove a door from a vehicle while patients were in the vehicle?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been inside the vehicle taking care of the patient while the door/roof was removed from the vehicle?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been the nozzle person on a structure fire?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you coached a firefighter to improve their personal performance on the fire department?	1+	5+	10+
How many multi-department structure fires have you attended as a firefighter?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you flowed the monitor nozzle on a truck?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you raised a ladder to the second story of a building for the purposes of climbing?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you opened a fire hydrant to supply water to a vehicle?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you donned a SCBA for a working fire structure?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you completed an EMS patient report?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you completed a NFIRS response report?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have changed the chain on a chain saw?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you changed the blade on the K-12 saw?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you worn the ice rescue suit in training?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you ventilated using the positive pressure ventilation fan?	1+	5+	10+

1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you flowed the monitor nozzle on a truck?	1
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you flowed the monitor nozzle off the truck?	2
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you been on the nozzle on the first attack line on a structure fire?	3
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you been on the nozzle on the first attack line on a vehicle fire?	4
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you raised a ladder to the second story of a building for the purposes of climbing?	5
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you opened a fire hydrant to supply water to a vehicle?	6
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you donned a SCBA for a working fire structure or car?	7
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you donned a SCBA in training?	8
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have donned your protective clothing for an incident?	9
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you donned your protective clothing for training?	10
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you pumped a truck for a working structure or car fire?	11
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you used the jaws to extricate someone from a car?	12

1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you started the brush rig pump?	13
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you started the power unit for the extrication equipment?	14
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you lost a piece of your protective clothing?	15
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you drove into a field in 4-wheel drive?	16
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you pulled a 1 3/4" preconnect?	17
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you pulled a 2 1/2" preconnect?	18
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you flowed water from a 2 1/2" preconnect?	19
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you used the defibrillator in training?	20
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you used the defibrillator on a real person?	21
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you performed CPR on a real person?	22
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you been in Command of extrication event?	23
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you been in Command of a car fire?	24
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you been in Command of a structure fire?	25
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you completed an EMS patient report?	26
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you completed a NFIRS response report?	27
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you changed the chain on a chain saw?	28
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you changed the blade on the K-12 saw?	29
1	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you repacked the 5" hose bed?	30
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you raised a pole light?	31
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you looked up a road in the road book?	32
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you set up and operated the Pro-Pak foam system?	33
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you driven first due engine to an emergency?	34
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you drafted when pumping?	35
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you set up the fold-a-tank?	36
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you established a water supply system using a nose to butt operation?	37
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you established a water supply to the sprinkler system?	38
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you worn the ice rescue suit in training?	39
0	3	5	More than 5	How many times have you ventilated using the positive pressure ventilation fan?	40



National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)

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